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from
CHINA

Fourth Series

Folk Tales from China

Fourth Series

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Journey to the Sun

(A Chuang Story)

Long, long ago, we Chuang people knew there was a sun in the sky; that it rose in the east; that all creatures on earth could not live without it. But at that particular time, we Chuangs were completely denied sunlight.

In those days the place in which we lived was wrapped in absolute darkness all through the night and the day, devoid of sunlight and warmth. It was infested with wild animals—tigers, panthers, wolves and other beasts of prey—which took heavy toll of us. How could we kill these animals in such darkness? So it was decided to send some people to the sun to ask for its help.

A commotion arose among the people when they learned of this. Everyone clamoured to go.

A sixty-year-old man broke from the crowd: "I'll go. I'm getting on in years. I can't work on the land. But I am up to the trip—I can walk."

A sturdy, middle-aged man pushed his way through the crowd. "You can't go!" he said to the old man. "I'm strong; and, since I can make 160 *li* a day, I can quickly reach the sun."

He was followed by more and more healthy young men and women, each claiming to be the right person to go and promising to be there and back in the shortest time possible.

At this stage, a ten-year-old boy made his voice heard: "I think none of you are suitable to go. You all seem to forget that the sun is far, far from us. It can't be reached in forty or fifty years; it will probably take ninety years to get there. I am young. I am the obvious one for the trip."

He had barely finished when a hot discussion ensued.

"There's something in what he says."

"He's strong and healthy."

"We'd better let him go."

"He is very clever!"

. . . . . .

A twenty-year-old pregnant woman called Maleh demanded silence, waving her hand above her head. "Be quiet, all of you!" she cried.

All fell silent.

She went on: "The boy was right when he said the sun is far from us. I don't think it possible to get there even in ninety years. I think you had better let me go. For one thing, I am strong and neither towering mountains nor serpents nor wild beasts can daunt me. In addition, I am with child. If I can't reach my goal, my child can certainly do so."

Hearing this, all clapped approval. So it was decided that Maleh would journey to the sun, and, when she got there, that she should burn a fire as a signal.

She set out eastward. After eight months or so she gave birth to a bonny baby. She took her baby along. She walked and walked till the seventieth year when she was too exhausted to drag her body further. So she stayed in a peasant's house and told her child to carry on.

During the long period of seventy years they, mother and child, had scaled tens of thousands of high mountains, crossed tens of thousands of big rivers and come across tens of thousands of serpents and wild beasts. They had experienced all sorts of suffering and hardship, and on many occasions had even risked their lives. But they had come through all this safe and sound. For one thing, both were strong enough to scale the mountains and clever enough to elude the serpents and wild beasts.

On their way, Maleh and her child met many people who, hearing they were going to the sun, were

anxious to help them, guiding them through the mountains, ferrying them across rivers, giving them clothes and shoes, and cooking them meals.

But what of their people at home? After Maleh's departure, early every morning they looked eagerly towards the east to see whether the fire signal burned in the sky. One year elapsed; then another. It was now seventy years since Maleh's departure, and there was no sign of the fire it was hoped she would light. Everything continued as usual: no sunlight, no warmth; and everywhere roamed tigers, panthers and wolves. Everybody thought Maleh had died on the way. All gave up hope.

On the last day of the ninety-ninth year, the disheartened watchers saw a big fire burn in the eastern sky, colouring it with a blood-red tinge. Almost simultaneously, a glowing sun rose, casting its golden rays over all corners of our land. The tigers, panthers and wolves which had molested us Chuang people from time immemorial were wiped out.

From that day to the present, Chuang peasants, as a token of their tribute to Maleh and her son, set out to work in the fields when the sun rises and come home only when it sets.

Daka[1] *and Dalun*

(A Chuang Story)

Daka's mother died when she was two years old. Her father married again when she was three.

The stepmother was at first very kind to Daka. She looked after her with great care and saw to it that she lacked nothing of food and clothing. In fact she treated her as if she were her own child.

But Daka's good fortune was like that of an emperor on the stage—quickly fading. It was not long before her stepmother gave birth to a child named Dalun, Daka's happy days came to an end. Instead of being a darling to her stepmother she became a continuous affront. She was spanked and scolded without respite. Dalun, even as a small child, was

[1] Daka means orphan in the Chuang language.

quick to sense her superior position on account of her mother's power in the family. She soon became a young despot, constantly bullying her elder sister.

Misfortunes, as a common saying has it, never come singly—while Daka was still young, her father died. Her conditions then changed from bad to worse. She did not share the better food and clothing of her sister and she was not even allowed to eat the left-overs.

Time passed. Daka became a beautiful girl, while Dalun grew ugly looking with a pock-marked face.

It happened that a wedding feast was to take place in a neighbouring village. The stepmother dressed Dalun in her holiday clothes and made preparations for attendance at the feast.

"Mother, please let me go with my sister," said Daka.

Her stepmother's expression hardened: "So you want to go? Well, here's a job for you. If you can do it, you may go; if not, then keep silent and stay where you are, you nuisance." Saying which, she took five piculs of sesame and six piculs of soya beans and mixed them thoroughly. Putting the mixture before Daka she said: "If you can separate these two kinds of grains today I'll let you go to the feast."

Having said this in a jeering tone, she departed.

Daka looked at the mixed grain with a stunned expression. She knew she could not separate them in ten days, least of all in one. She realized there was

no hope of her attending the feast. She sobbed and cried pitifully.

Hearing her daughter crying the spirit of Daka's mother changed herself into a crow, which alighted on the roof of the house and sang:

Daka, Daka!
Don't cry and don't worry.
Separating the soya beans and sesame is no difficult task.
Let me tell you what to do.
Take a sieve, put the mixture into it, and shake.
Then you will separate them easily.

Having heard the crow's song, Daka was overjoyed. She took a sieve and did as the crow had advised. In less than an hour the sesame seeds and soya beans were separated. She ran to her stepmother and said: "Mother, I've separated the grains, now can I go?"

Her stepmother was greatly surprised at the feat. "The young devil certainly has uncanny skill," she thought. But she was not through with her mean tricks. "Do you think that's all?" she said harshly. "It's not that easy." She handed Daka two water pails. Fill the three jars in the courtyard with water and I'll let you go," she said.

Daka thought this was an easy job. Rolling up her sleeves and taking the pails, she went to the nearby stream. Little did she suspect that the bottoms of the

pails had been perforated and the water she drew all went down through the holes before she could get to the jars. It was approaching noon and the jars were still empty. Daka fell into such a state of despair that she could not restrain her tears.

Daka's mother heard her daughter cry. Again she changed herself into a crow, perched on a tree branch, and sang:

Daka, Daka!
Don't cry and don't worry.
It isn't hard to fill the jars with water.
Plug up the holes with grass and mud,
And you will easily fulfil your task.

Daka did as the crow told her. She plugged the holes in the pails with grass and plastered them with mud. Soon the jars were filled.

Having completed this second task, Daka ran to her stepmother and said: "Mother, I've filled the jars with water, please let me go." Amazed, her stepmother stared at her. Recovering herself, she said sharply, "But you have no new clothes, how can you go? Look at your sister. She has a red jacket and blue trousers, all brand-new. Her shoes are embroidered with decorations and her stockings are spotlessly white. And look at yourself! Your clothes are patched. If you go, you'll be taken for a beggar rather than a guest."

Having said this she turned on her heel and left Daka standing.

Daka burst into tears and her mother, knowing her daughter was in distress, assumed the form of a crow and again came to her rescue. She perched on the roof and sang:

Daka, Daka!
Don't cry and don't worry.
Go and dig under the loquat tree,
And you'll find there new clothes, shoes
and stockings.

Daka was so glad that she danced. She took a spade and dug below the loquat tree. She had turned up only a few spadefuls of earth when lo! a package appeared. She opened the package and found a beautiful gown, a pair of red silk trousers with laced edges, a pair of shoes with pointed toes, a pair of gold bangles, and a pair of ear-rings. Daka lost no time in dressing herself up. Then she ran to her stepmother and said: "Mother, I've dressed myself in new clothes, please let me go." Her stepmother, bewildered and frustrated, could do nothing but grant Daka's request.

It was the first time that Daka had been to a wedding feast. She felt exceedingly happy, and danced on her way. While passing over a bridge she stumbled on a stone ledge and one of her shoes fell into

the river. Just at this time a young man named Hsiu Tsai, riding a big horse, came along. As soon as he arrived at the head of the bridge, his horse stopped and would go no further. He spurred and whipped the animal. It neighed, but refused to budge.

The young man felt the horse's behaviour rather strange. He alighted, looked around, and tried to find a cause for the animal's obstinacy. Suddenly he saw a woman's red shoe with a pointed toe on a little sandbank in the river. Could it be possible, he thought, giving free rein to his imagination, that I and the loser of this shoe are predestined to be united in marriage? He tethered his horse to the railing of the bridge, went down and rescued the shoe.

The story of the young man picking up a shoe with a pointed toe on a river shoal soon spread through the village. It was also rumoured that he would marry the girl to whom the shoe belonged. Daka knew nothing of the rumours but they soon reached the ears of Dalun's mother. So she went to the bridge and said to Hsiu Tsai: "The shoe belongs to my daughter Dalun."

"Let her come and identify it," he answered.

"She is attending a wedding feast but will come very soon," said Dalun's mother.

A few minutes later Daka and Dalun approached from the other side of the bridge. Pointing at Dalun, her mother said: "Look, there comes my daughter,

the girl wearing a red jacket and blue trousers." Going to Dalun, she took her hand, gave her a significant glance and said, "This young man has picked up your lost shoe, Dalun; go quickly and claim it."

Daka had keen eyes and saw immediately that the shoe held in the young man's hand was hers. "Sir," she said, coming forward, "the shoe is mine, please give it back to me."

Seeing Daka claiming the shoe, the stepmother lost her temper. "The shoe is Dalun's," she said, "how could it be yours, you imbecile?" Saying this, she gave Daka a nasty pinch.

As they quarrelled over possession of the shoe Hsiu Tsai found it rather difficult to make up his mind as to the rightful owner. Then an idea occurred to him. "Stop quarrelling," he said. "You say it's yours and she says it's hers. If you continue to argue like this, there will be no end of it even if you should quarrel for a whole year. Now I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take a bramble and place it in the middle of the bridge. Each of you girls will pass by it. The one to whose clothes the bramble sticks is the owner of the shoe."

Saying this, he took a thorny shrub and placed it in the middle of the bridge.

Dalun was the first to try. She made her dress swing as hard as possible so that it might be caught

by the bramble. But no matter how hard she tried, it never caught.

Now it was Daka's turn. As soon as she came near the bramble a wind blew her coat and it was immediately caught by the bramble. So Hsiu Tsai gave the shoe to Daka.

A few days later a bridal chair carried Daka to him, and she became his wife.

Daka and her husband loved each other and their married life was very happy. Daka no longer suffered from bad treatment by her stepmother. Later she gave birth to a boy.

Once Daka, riding in a chair and taking her child with her, went back to visit her stepmother. When her chair arrived at the door of the house, her stepmother hid her hostility and welcomed her with much fuss.

"Darling," said her stepmother hypocritically. "How nice to see you. Come in and have a rest."

Then she spent a long time preparing a sumptuous feast for Daka.

When Dalun saw that her mother was so kind to Daka she was wild with rage. She went to the backyard, cried and railed at her mother.

"Silly girl!" her mother whispered in her ear, "do you think your mother is a fool?"

Then in a low voice she told Dalun her plot.

Dalun was appeased and came back joyfully to take dinner with her sister.

"Daka," said Dalun after the dinner was over, "you haven't been home for several years. The water in the well in our backyard has become very clear. Let's go and look at our reflections in it."

"All right, let's go," said Daka, willing to please.

As they leaned over looking at the water, Dalun suddenly pushed Daka into the well. Then she went back into her room and dressed up like Daka. "Darling," she said to Daka's child, "let's go home."

The child looked at Dalun and saw that it was not his mother. "No, I won't," he said. "You are not my mother. My mother has no pock marks on her face."

"Your grandmother was frying some dumplings for me a moment ago," Dalun explained, "the fire was too big and the oil splashed on my face, hence these marks. And you took me for a stranger, you foolish child."

The child believed what Dalun said and went back with her.

When she got into the chair the bearers felt the burden heavier than before. "How strange it is," they said to each other, "the lady and child seem to be heavier than before."

Dalun overheard them. "It's a common saying," she explained, "that 'after eating rice one's belly is

bigger and after eating dumplings one's body is heavier'; and, you see, I've just eaten some dumplings." So she passed for Daka again.

When Dalun arrived at Hsiu Tsai's home, the young man saw the pock marks on her face and also suspected that she was not Daka. She told him the same story as she had told the child. He accepted her explanation, but he was not entirely free of suspicions.

One day when Hsiu Tsai was passing through a wood on his way home from the school where he was teaching he saw a small cuckoo on a tree. To his astonishment he heard it sing:

Coo, coo, coo, coo!
A beautiful wife changes into a pock-faced woman.

He was perplexed at the cuckoo's words. This little bird, he thought, might be the spirit of my wife.

"Cuckoo, cuckoo," he said, "if you are really my wife, come down and fly into my sleeve."

Saying this, he held up his sleeve. In a flash, the small cuckoo had disappeared into it.

Hsiu Tsai took the cuckoo home, put it into a cage which was hung in the parlour.

One day Dalun, having nothing to do, wandered idly into the parlour. Seeing a loom there she decided she would learn how to weave. She sat down by the loom and began to work. She had just taken

up the shuttle when the loom overturned. Seeing this the cuckoo sang:

Coo, coo, coo, coo!
You murdered a wife and deceived a husband.
You killed from the motive of avarice
You have aroused the anger even of a loom.

Dalun was enraged. She took up a whip and rained blows on the cage. The small cuckoo sang again:

Coo, coo, coo, coo!
Dalun is a nine-tailed fox.
She is as cruel as a tiger,
And as venomous as a snake.

Dalun became mad with anger. She opened the cage, took out the bird and strangled it.

In the evening, when Hsiu Tsai came home, he found the cuckoo gone. He questioned Dalun. She said she had killed it.

"But why did you kill it?" he asked.

"To make some broth," Dalun answered.

Then she brought from the kitchen two bowls of broth, placing one before Hsiu Tsai, keeping one for herself. After she had taken some of the broth, she remarked that it tasted awfully bitter. But Hsiu Tsai said his tasted good.

"Let's exchange," she said, transposing the bowls.

This time Dalun's broth tasted still more bitter while Hsiu Tsai insisted that his broth tasted as good as before. Dalun was furious and threw the whole cauldron of broth into the courtyard.

Not long afterwards a grove of bamboo grew up at the place where Dalun poured the broth. In the summer Hsiu Tsai used to sit in the bamboo grove where it was very cool. One day as he was seated there enjoying the coolness, a brown fruit fell into his lap. It tasted very sweet, and he ate it.

When Dalun learned of the windfall she went to sit in the bamboo grove. She sat there for a long time but no fruit fell. Suddenly one of the bamboo stalks bent down, the twigs caught Dalun's hair and raised her from the ground. Dalun was frightened and yelled for help.

When Hsiu Tsai heard Dalun's cry, he came to the courtyard. Dalun's condition seemed to Hsiu Tsai both funny and puzzling. He took a knife and cut down the bamboo from which Dalun was suspended. Dalun fell to the ground, and her whole body was filled with pain.

Getting up, she seized the knife from Hsiu Tsai and cut down all the bamboo plants. When the villagers learned that the bamboo plants in the Hsiu Tsai's backyard had been cut down, they came to have a look at the felled plants. Among them was an old

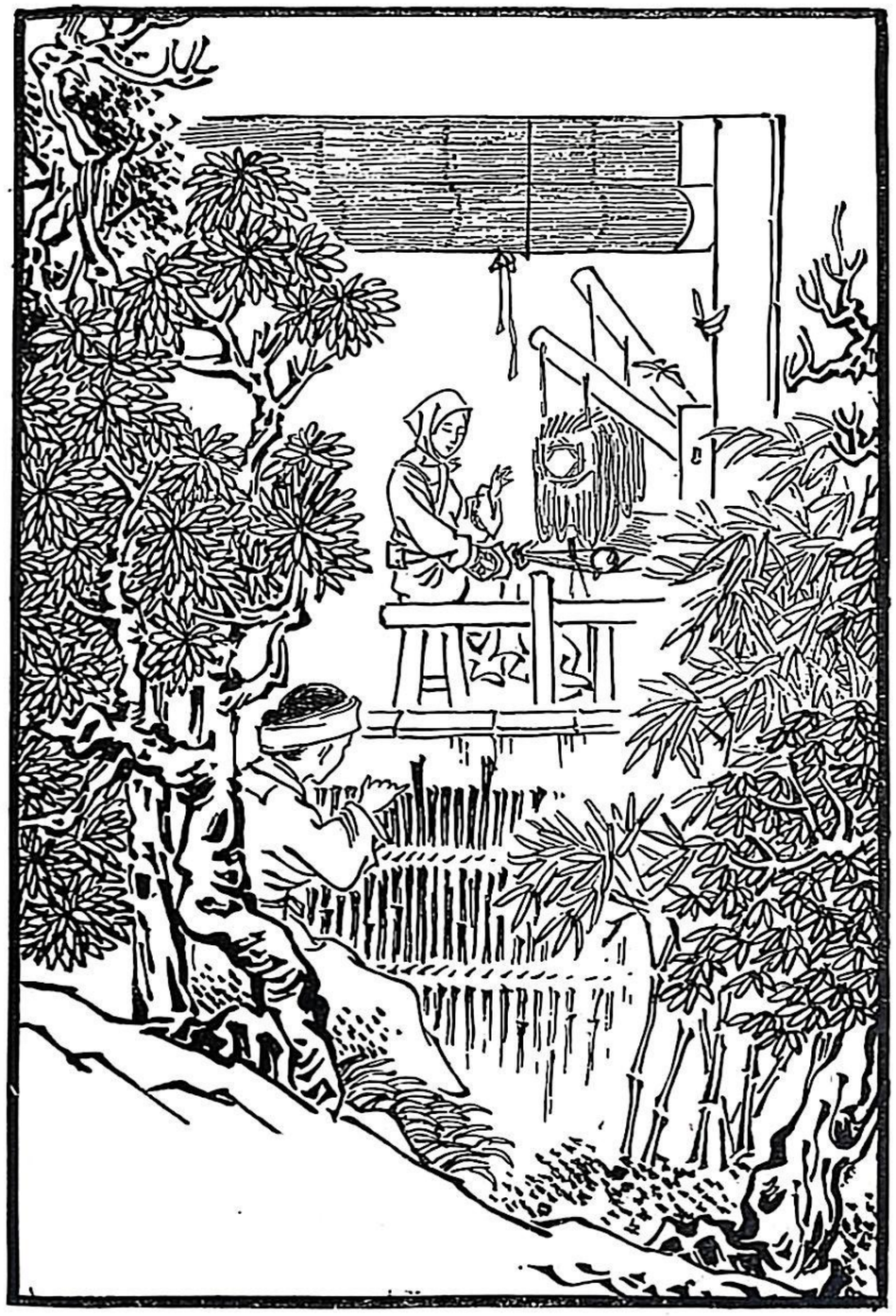
woman. She asked Hsiu Tsai to give her one of the stalks to make a tube reel for her loom. Of course he granted her request.

When the new reel was put on, a strange thing happened which mystified the old woman. She used to work in the fields in the daytime and weave in the evening. With only a limited time for weaving, she could do no better than a metre a day. But now when she came back from the field a big roll of woven cloth lay on her loom. Yet judged by its length, it would take ten looms to weave so much cloth in one day. She did not know who had done the work for her. She questioned everyone in the neighbourhood. All said they knew nothing about it. But some of them told her that latterly they had heard the sound of weaving on her loom throughout the day.

Next day the old woman got up and pretended to go to the fields as usual. Instead she hid herself intending to find out who did the work for her. Stealthily creeping to the window, she peeped in. A beautiful girl emerged from the bamboo reel. She stood and looked around. Finding nobody in the room she sat by the loom and began to weave.

The old woman was elated at the discovery. She rushed into the room and held her. "You are a wonderful girl," she said, "what is your name?"

The girl tried to escape but the old woman's hold was too strong for her to break away.



"Dear lady," she answered, "I'm a girl having neither mother nor home."

"Let me adopt you as my daughter," said the old woman.

"Very good," said the girl. "But I was murdered by somebody and I'm only a spirit without flesh and bones. Go to the market and buy some new chopsticks. Boil them and let me drink the water in which they are boiled, then I'll become a real human being." The old lady did accordingly and the girl was reincarnated, looking even more beautiful.

"Mother," said the girl one day, "the weather is fine and I want you to invite a guest for me."

"Whom do you want to invite?" said the old woman.

"Hsiu Tsai of our village," said the girl.

"He is a person of great dignity—how could he condescend to accept an invitation from poor people like us?"

"Never mind, mother, you just go and ask him. Tell him that a girl in your house has invited him and asks him to bring his child with him."

Unable to make the girl change her mind the old woman went to Hsiu Tsai's house.

Hsiu Tsai and his child came with the old woman who at once got busy preparing a meal for the guests. But the girl sat by the window behind a curtain and would not come out.

The old woman gave a chicken leg to the child. He enjoyed it very much. Suddenly a big black and white cat came over to the child, mewing. Jumping up, it seized the chicken leg and ran away with it. The child cried and began to chase the cat. When he got to the window, he saw the girl. Rushing forward he shouted: "Mama, mama! This is really my mama."

Hsiu Tsai heard his child calling "mama!" and was surprised. He went to the window and was dumbfounded at what he saw. The girl, tears running down her cheeks, was holding the child in her arms and the child was smiling happily.

Then, calling "Daka, my Daka!" Hsiu Tsai rushed forward and embraced her. He was so happy that he did not know what to say. His eyes were full of tears.

Next day Hsiu Tsai went to the old woman's house and took Daka back home.

When Dalun saw Daka, she was frightened and did not know what to do. "I thought you were drowned in the well, Daka," she said uneasily. "How did it come about that you are still alive?"

"One doesn't die so easily, you know," Daka replied. "You cannot kill a person who has a kind heart."

Dalun felt angry and also very disturbed.

One day Dalun asked Daka: "Why is your skin so white?"

"My mother put me in a mortar and pounded me with a pestle," said Daka. "That's why my skin is so white."

"Are you telling the truth, Daka?" Dalun said doubtfully.

"Surely," said Daka. "If rice becomes white when pounded in a mortar, why not a girl?"

"All right," said Dalun, "I'll go tomorrow and ask my mother to whiten my skin."

Early next day Dalun went home and said to her mother: "Do you know why Daka's skin is so white? It's because her mother put her in a mortar and pounded her with a pestle. Now I want you to do the same thing to me." Having said this, she jumped into a huge mortar.

Her mother thought what she said was true. She loosened a clutch. The huge pestle fell down right on Dalun who was immediately killed. Her mother was deeply grieved over Dalun's death. She wept bitterly. A few days later she died of grief.

The spirits of Dalun and her mother were changed into two birds known as *chiu chiao*. They sing day and night the words: "Harm others, harm yourself!"

And Hsiu Tsai and Daka lived happily ever after.

Origin of Chingko[1] Seed

(A Tibetan Story)

Several thousand years ago, there was a kingdom of Pula. It lay far, far from Loujo. The Kingdom of Pula had a vast territory and dense population. The people of the kingdom ate beef and mutton and drank cow's milk or goat's milk. As there were but a few fruit trees, in the kingdom and these were in the king's palace, only the king himself and his ministers could eat fruit.

The king's son, Achu, was a clever, brave and good-hearted young prince. Achu had heard that Jihwuta,[2]

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[1] An important crop in Tibet is the highland barley called *chingko*, from which is made *tsamba*, the parched flour which every Tibetan carries and mixes with butter and tea to make his staple food.

[2] Jihwuta means god in Chiajung language and refers to the mountain god here.

mountain god, had stored up a large quantity of seed which, if sown in the fields, would grow into fine grain, very agreeable to the taste when cooked. He thought it would be a good idea to let the people of the whole kingdom have grain to eat, so he planned to pay a personal visit to Jihwuta and ask the latter to give him some seed.

The prince told his father and mother of his plan. The king and queen knew that, to carry out his venture the prince would have to cover a distance of nine thousand *li*, climb over ninety-nine high mountains and cross ninety-nine big rivers[1] before he would reach the mountain god Jihwuta's place. They were afraid that misfortune might happen to the prince on his way so they advised him not to go. The prince's heart was bent on getting seed and bringing it home, and although they tried most earnestly to persuade him to give up his project, he refused to follow his parents' advice. The king and queen, finding it hopeless to induce him to drop his idea, ordered twenty selected warriors to escort him to the mountain god.

On the following day, Prince Achu started on his journey, accompanied by the warriors who were armed with long spears and daggers. All rode on fleet horses.

[1] Tibetans describe things numerous in number as ninety-nine.

Climbing over so many high mountains and crossing so many big rivers, Prince Achu's warriors died one after another. Some were killed by local savage tribes, others were bitten by poisonous snakes or devoured by fierce tigers. After climbing ninety-eight high mountains and crossing ninety-eight rivers, only the prince and his horse remained alive.

Leading his horse, Prince Achu staggered and climbed on to the next mountain. He had almost reached the peak when a heavy wind blew up and it rained violently. Achu had to take shelter in a cave, his body huddled close to his horse.

When the sky cleared, Achu, still leading his horse, climbed to the summit. He felt it strange that there the sun was as red as fire and nothing indicated that there had been any downpour.

Under a tall yew an old woman sat, twisting woollen yarn. Walking towards the old woman, Achu saluted her and asked where Jihwuta lived and how he could find him. The old woman looked Achu up and down. It was not until Achu had told her all his personal history and of his plan, that the old woman finally remarked: "It is quite easy to find Jihwuta. Just climb over this mountain, cross the river, and there on the mountainside you will come across a waterfall. Jihwuta will come out to receive you if you call him by his name three times in a loud voice.

The old woman was nobody but Mother Earth. She had appeared for the purpose of giving aid to Achu because she had been moved by his sincerity. As Achu was about to express his thanks, the old woman vanished.

At the end of the ninety-ninth river, Achu saw a waterfall crashing noisily from the mountain top. Facing the waterfall, Achu saluted most respectfully and cried: "My greatly respected god, Jihwuta, kindly come out. I ask your help!"

At the third call, an old man as tall as the mountain itself emerged from the waterfall. His snow-white beard was drawn out from the peak to the river just like the waterfall. This giant old man was Jihwuta, whom Prince Achu begged for the favour of an interview.

"Who is calling me?" Jihwuta asked.

Bending his head, the old man saw Achu and said: "Oh, oh! There you are! Where do you come from? What can I do for you?"

"My greatly respected Mountain God, I have come here to see you. I am the prince of the Kingdom of Pula. I have heard that you have much grain here. I beg you to give me some seed in order that I may take it back home so that the people of my country may all be able to eat grain."

Having finished his words, Achu again saluted the old man.

"What? Seed!" The old man pondered, and then laughed heartily. The laughter made the mountain shake and the river halt its flow. Then he remarked: "My little prince, you are mistaken! I have no grain here. All the grain is in the domain of the Snake King Kepuleh where the crops are harvested. Only there can you find your seed."

Achu was greatly worried. He asked Jihwuta where the Snake King lived and how he could obtain seed from him.

Jihwuta solemnly replied: "The Snake King lives not far from here. With a fast horse you can get there in seven days and nights. But I warn you that the Snake King is both ferocious and mean. He has never been willing to give his grain to people to eat. Many who have gone there have been transformed by him into dogs as a punishment and eaten by him. If you go, you, too, will be transformed into a dog and eaten by him. Are you not afraid?"

"I'm not afraid of him. I'm afraid of nothing if, by daring, it means that I can get seed," Achu answered.

Seeing that Achu was so determined and was such a clever and courageous boy, Jihwuta told him in minute detail the way leading to the Snake King. He repeatedly emphasized: "If you wish to get seed, the only way is to steal the grain. After the crops are harvested in the autumn, the Snake King stores

the grain in bags under his throne, and it is protected by a circle of guards. But, every year, when the sun shines in the middle of the sky on the Worship Day, the Snake King pays a visit to the Dragon King by a lake on a mountain peak. Although his visit lasts only about the time it takes for one stick of incense to burn out, his guards make use of that short time to take a nap. That is the best time to steal the grain."

As he finished his words, Jihwuta took from his bosom a very small object, no bigger than a piece of soya bean which he handed to Achu. "I am too old to give you much help," he said. "But here is a wind pearl, a gift I present to you. In emergency, hold it in your mouth and it will help you to run as fast as the wind."

Achu expressed his thanks to Jihwuta, who gave him this final counsel: "If unfortunately you are transformed into a dog by the Snake King, you should quickly run towards the east; and you may return to your country only when a girl falls in love with you. Then you will be transformed back into a human being. Go ahead, my boy, and good luck to you!"

Riding on horseback, Prince Achu proceeded very slowly. After each two days of travelling he rested one full day. The journey lasted from summer to autumn. The day he left Jihwuta, he was very thin but now he became healthy, sturdy and vigorous.

Achu arrived at the region under the control of the Snake King just after the crops had been reaped. In the boundless fields, there was nothing but stubble; and not a soul was to be seen. Achu knew that the Snake King lived on the distant mountain, so he continued on horseback towards it.

When he reached the foot of the mountain, he alighted from his horse, took his dry provision bag and removed the reins so that, unhampered, the horse could return to the Kingdom of Pula. Carrying the provision bag on his back, Achu was afraid to climb the mountain where the king lived, so he climbed one opposite the Snake King's cave palace. When he reached the summit, he made his quarters in a rock cave directly opposite entrance to the king's palace. Only a broad, deep gully separated them. Spreading dry grass and branches as a bed, and, while he was lying down, he could see what was going on in the king's apartments.

At midday of the Worship Day, while Achu was taking a nap in his cave, he suddenly heard the tinkling of many bells. Raising his head, Achu saw that the Snake King, accompanied by his bodyguards, was walking towards the peak along the road passing his cave entrance. He was tall in build, and wore a scaly robe, on the edges of which were hanging many tiny silver bells. Achu knew that the Snake King was making for the lake on the peak. He im-

mediately crept out of his cave and ran to the gully as fast as his legs could carry him. Crawling carefully he made his way towards the Snake King's cave entrance. It turned out as Jihwuta had said: the guards were all asleep. Achu had crept almost as far as the cave entrance, when the sound of the bells came clearly to his ears. The guards immediately arose. Achu realized that time equal to the burning of one incense stick had passed, and the Snake King was returning. He was frightened, and took cover in a bush by the roadside.

Achu did not leave the bush until the Snake King had disappeared into his palace. Not only had he failed to steal any grain but he had even failed to get into the chamber where it was stored. He returned to his cave disappointed and worried over his failure. After a long pause a beaming smile replaced the worried look. He had thought of a good plan—he would tie a rope to an overhanging branch of a tree on the mountain on his side and swing over to the other side. This would save a lot of time. He took off two garments made of wool. First, he unravelled the cloth into loose yarn and then wound the yarn into a rope.

It was midday of another Worship Day. The Snake King left his cave with two bodyguards and headed towards the peak. This time, Achu walked swiftly but carefully to a tree opposite the king's

palace. He climbed the tree and tied the rope to a big branch which overhung the gully. Next, he slid down the rope. When he reached the end, he made a powerful swing, sending himself right to the king's cave entrance. He stealthily but quickly passed by the snoring guards and entered the cave.

It was pitch dark inside the entrance. Achu fumbled his way along the wall, made several turns and finally walked into the Snake King's main hall. It was lighted by ever-burning lamps. At the far end of the hall was a platform on which stood a chair decorated with gold. Some of the guards were sleeping on the platform; others were sleeping in front of it. The Snake King's grain was piled in bags under the platform.

Achu stepped over the bodies of two sleeping guards and walked noiselessly towards the spot. He opened one sack and filled his own bag with the grain which he hung around his neck. He then took a handful of grain which he carried loose. Once again he passed the guards and walked out of the main hall. Under the lamps, Achu saw that the grain in his hand was bright yellow—the precious highland barley called *chingko*.

Achu made his way through the hall to the cave entrance. But, in his happiness he forgot to act prudently—his foot touched a guard. At the guard's surprised shout, two others jumped up and barred his

way with their spears. Achu instantly threw the *chingko* seed which he had in his hand into the faces of guards, and, while they momentarily retreated, rubbing their eyes, Achu took the opportunity to draw out his dagger and kill one guard, who fell instantly. Achu was ready to kill the second when other guards, hearing the groans, rushed and surrounded him. After disposing of several more guards, Achu took to his heels. But he was so frightened and confused that he took the wrong turning and collided with the Snake King who was nearing the entrance. Achu fell to the ground.

Sandwiched between the Snake King in front and the guards behind, Achu jumped sideways into the gully and placed the "wind pearl" in his mouth. As he did so, the Snake King broke into a loud, derisive laugh, and pointed to the sky. Immediately there were zigzags of lightning and loud crashes of thunder. The thunderbolts and lightning fell like blows on Achu. In a flash, he was transformed into a yellow dog.

For a space, Achu did not know how to act; then he remembered Jihwuta's words and made his way towards the gully. He noted with astonishment that it was as if he was endowed with wings. At one stroke he flew over the gully and several high mountains. Behind him came thunderbolts and lightning flashes but always he outdistanced them.

In the spring of the second year, Prince Achu, now transformed by the Snake King into a yellow dog, went along a big river and reached Loujo. Here, no place was sown to crops. Except for some fruit trees planted near local headmen's offices, all was green grass. It grew profusely on the mountains and in the fields and cows and sheep were everywhere.

Achu soon found out that the headman was called Kenpang and that he had three beautiful daughters. The eldest was called Tsetang, the second daughter Hamutso, and the youngest, Ngoman. Ngoman was the most beautiful and was cleverer than her sisters. She was also the kindest-hearted of the trio. Ngoman loved all good people and she loved also dogs, cats, birds and flowers. Recalling Jihwuta's words, Achu thought that Ngoman was the only one who could save him. He made up his mind to visit her and present to her his *chingko* seed as well as his love.

Achu wandered around the headman's office for several days. One day when Ngoman was plucking flowers in a meadow behind the headman's office, Achu rushed forward and held on to her skirt with his teeth, wagging his tail. Seeing that it was a lovely yellow dog, Ngoman squatted on the ground, caressing its head and speaking gentle words as she did to all animals.

Although Achu had been transformed into a dog by the Snake King, he was as intelligent as ever and

his beautiful eyes could well convey what he had in his mind. His two eyes, filled with tears, were fixed on Ngoman. While he barked continually, he turned his head and indicated the provision bag hanging on his neck.

Ngoman thought the dog was asking her to take off the bag. She, therefore, took the bag from his neck and opened it. She found to her surprise that the bag was filled with yellow *chingko* seed. She did not know from where the seed had come, nor what they might be used for. Achu, still gripping her skirt, used his fore claws to scratch a small hole in the ground and indicated that she should place some of the tiny yellow grains in it.

Ngoman understood. As Achu scratched each hole, she placed a *chingko* seed in it. With the seed sown, both Ngoman and Achu were wet with perspiration.

The good-hearted Ngoman loved the dog dearly because he brought her seed as precious as gold and especially was her affection deepened because he could only use his eyes to express his ideas. She considered the planted *chingko* and Achu as her most beloved treasures. When she returned to her home she took Achu with her. And thereafter wherever she went, Achu went, too.

The *chingko* was obtained almost at the cost of Achu's life. When Achu went to see how the grain

was growing, Ngoman always followed him. They saw the *chingko* shooting forth sprouts, growing leaves and bearing ears.

It was autumn; fruit was ripe and cows and sheep fat. It was also time for the headman's daughters to be married.

On a moonlit night, the headman gave a dancing party on the meadow before his office building, to which all local rich men and their wives, sons and daughters were invited. The headman had two purposes in mind when he decided to hold the party: first, to celebrate the excellent crop; and second, to choose suitable sons-in-law for his three daughters.

Except the headman's family and local rich men with their wives, sons and daughters, no other people were present. Achu was there because he was Ngoman's beloved dog. He could go anywhere Ngoman went.

Those present at the party sang one folk-song after another and danced one dance after another. Whenever Ngoman joined the dancing, Achu would prance behind her. When Ngoman stopped dancing, Achu would stay close to her.

After singing several folk-songs, dancing a few times and drinking tea together, the people who before had been unknown to each other were now acquainted. At this stage the young gentlemen sat

themselves down on the meadow in a circle with the three girls inside it. The headman's three daughters started to dance their best *kuochuang,* holding fruit in their bosoms;[1] they were choosing their lovers.

When the three sisters had finished their first dance round, the elder sister, Tsetang, chose one of the young men—the son of a local official—as her husband. She gave her fruit to him and danced with him side by side and they then made their way to the headman, Kenpang.

On the second round, the second sister Hamutso chose her sweetheart—a local headman's son, who was heir to his father's post. Following the tradition, Hamutso presented her fruit to him and moved in dancing steps with him towards her father.

With three rounds over, Ngoman failed to find anyone to her satisfaction. Not that the young men were poor or ugly but, for some reason which she herself could not understand, they seemed lacking in something.

Ngoman's beauty, kind nature and cleverness were well known to all, and good-looking young men all wished to marry her. When they saw that Ngoman did not choose one of them even after three rounds of *kuochuang,* they began to whisper indignantly:

[1] A traditional dance of the Tibetan girls in Szechuan. A girl dances with fruit in her bosom before a number of young men. When she has made up her mind to choose a certain young man to be her husband, she presents the fruit to him.

"What kind of a man does Ngoman really want as a husband?"

When Ngoman had finished dancing for the fourth round, she saw her lovely dog with tears in its eyes, sitting in the crowd. She suddenly thought of giving her friendship to her beloved dog instead of giving herself in marriage to one of the young men. She loved her dog dearly and couldn't bear to leave him. It so happened that, when she passed by the dog dancing, she leaned forward and the fruit which she held in her bosom fell on to the dog. According to local belief this was a disgraceful thing. Mortified and ashamed, Ngoman reproached herself for her clumsiness.

As soon as those around her, especially the young men, saw that she brought such a disgrace on herself in public, they assailed her with ridicule. They jeered and sneered that Ngoman had chosen the dog as her husband!

Ngoman's father was a man who could not bear to suffer even slight loss of "face." On witnessing Ngoman's discomfiture and the jeering of the young men, he was very angry and said Ngoman had brought him into public contempt. He said she was unworthy to be his daughter any longer. Ngoman's two sisters also considered the incident shameful and did not sympathize with her. They even joined the others jeering at her.

Ngoman's father denounced her and ordered her to leave the official residence once and for all. "Since you love the dog and have chosen him before the public instead of a husband, you must leave here with your dog and never come back again!" he declared.

Ngoman was heart-broken. Her tears were like strings of pearls on her cheeks. She walked towards the *chingko* field, weeping without ceasing, the dog following closely behind.

The *chingko* ears were ripe, nodding at Ngoman and her dog. Holding the dog in her arms, Ngoman wept bitterly.

The dog started speaking, "My dear, fair girl, don't grieve any more!"

Ngoman was dumbfounded. She stopped weeping and gazed at the dog.

"Don't be sad nor afraid of anything! I'm a man, not a dog."

Filled with fear, Ngoman pushed the dog from her. She could not believe that the dog might be a man.

"If you are a man, why have you been transformed into a dog?"

Achu replied: "Did you ever hear of the Kingdom of Pula? I am the prince of that kingdom. Our people have never had a chance to eat grain. I thought our people should have grain to eat, so I decided to steal some seed from the Snake King.

Just when I had stolen some *chingko* seed and was leaving, I ran into the king and he transformed me into this shape. But it will be possible for me to turn myself again into a man," said Achu, firmly and confidently.

Ngoman had a glance of the fields where the *chingko* was almost ripe and looked at the dog standing before her. She pictured the dog as a brilliant young prince, pulled him to her and hugged him tight. Though tears were still hanging on her lashes, her face was beaming with happiness.

"How fortunate we shall be when you are transformed again into a man!" she said warmly. "I will not then be jeered at by people and, moreover, we can live a happy life. But when will all this come about?"

"Before I left for the Snake King, I had paid a visit to Jihwuta," answered Achu. "He told me that, if I was unfortunately transformed into a dog by the Snake King, I should be transformed into a man when I found a girl who really loved me."

"I love you. My love for you is true," said Ngoman. "Why then have you not yet been transformed into a man? If you are transformed into a man, I'll do all you wish me to do."

"If you love me so earnestly, you should, first of all, collect some ripe *chingko* grain as quickly as possible, sew a small bag, fill it with seed and hang it

around my neck. Secondly, I'll return to the Kingdom of Pula without delay. On my journey thither, I'll sow the seed along the road. You had better follow me. When you come to a place where no *chingko* can be seen, you will see that I have been transformed into a man again."

Having said this, Achu stared into Ngoman's eyes, expecting her to reply.

Ngoman nodded her head silently, said nothing, but rose and started collecting the grain. She tore a piece of cloth from her skirt and sewed it into a bag. She filled the bag with the *chingko* and hung it on Achu's neck. She asked Achu to walk together with her, but he refused, saying: "From now on, I cannot be with you like this. I cannot bear to have you see me in such an ugly form. If you love me, just follow me."

Ngoman held Achu with both hands and caressed him again and again, tears streaming down their faces. Suddenly Achu broke away from her and ran towards the riverside.

Achu proceeded on his way with the seed bag on his neck, across the plain, not by the road. He would make a stop after every few paces, use his claws to scratch into the soft earth, and then sow some seed. He ate wild fruits to satisfy his hunger and drank brook water to quench his thirst.

Ngoman walked on the road far, far behind Achu. When she began her journey, she saw the newly-sown seeds. Later she saw the sprouts, leaves and ears. When she started the trip, she ate the dried provisions she carried on her back, but in time all the provisions were eaten. Then she had to gather wild fruits to satisfy her hunger and drink brook water to quench her thirst, just as Achu was doing. She was anxious to see Achu but she could not catch up with him.

Ngoman did not know how long she spent on the way. It might have been half a year or more. It was not until the *chingko* had ripened and the tree leaves had withered that she saw a city in the distance with many-storeyed buildings. Though she had suffered greatly from wind, frost, rain and snow, her heart was filled with joy and her face beamed with happiness because she would soon arrive at her lover's home. Though her boots were broken, her feet bruised, her clothes in tatters and her whole body covered with dust, her heart and face remained as pure and beautiful as ever.

Ngoman reached the Kingdom of Pula and finally entered its capital. She could see no *chingko* here but fine buildings and beautiful flowers and trees. She made many enquiries and she ascertained that her beloved yellow dog had already run into the palace. She walked along the main street towards the palace. It was a grand and magnificent building

situated in the centre of the capital, and surrounded by flowers and trees. When Ngoman stepped into the grounds, the dog came to her she stretched out her hands. There was an explosion and a puff of dense, white smoke and then, in the place where the dog had been, stood Prince Achu. He stepped out of the smoke and held Ngoman to him in a warm embrace. The brave prince Achu looked as young and bright as when he had started out on his perilous journey.

Achu introduced Ngoman to his father and mother—the king and queen of the Kingdom of Pula. The king and queen were so happy that tears ran down their cheeks. They loved their son as well as the good-hearted, beautiful and virtuous Ngoman.

That very evening Prince Achu and Ngoman were married. The king, queen, government ministers and many people were present at the wedding. In the course of the ceremony, the people composed one song after another to thank the brave and wise prince for bringing back the *chingko* seed for them and also to praise Ngoman who was clever, beautiful and virtuous.

Chingko now grew in an area stretching several thousand *li* from Loujo to the Kingdom of Pula, and all the people living in that area had *tsamba*[1] to eat.

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[1] See footnote to the title of this article.

Many people saw only that a yellow dog had sowed the *chingko* seed which grew into grain as precious as gold, but they did not know the yellow dog was Prince Achu himself. They believed that the god took pity on them and that the dog was sent to bring them the *chingko* seed. To express their appreciation to the god and to thank the dog who brought them the seed, each year after the harvest (at which time they eat new *tsamba*) they would knead *chingko* flour into *tsamba* to first feed the dogs. And right up to the present, nobody has ever tried to change this custom.

The Water Pearl

(A Nung Story)

On the southern border of Yunnan lies Black Bottom Village which has long been famous for its richness. The Nung people living in the locality are very proud of it, saying that it is a bright pearl glittering on a pitch-black background—the richest granary within a radius of a thousand *li*.

Black Bottom is located between a chain of mountains festooned with colourful wild flowers. It is dotted with the wooden houses of the Nung people and surrounded on all sides by dense groves of pine, cypress, bamboo, palm and banana. The Yenkang River, which flows from the Yenkang Mountain in the east, cuts Black Bottom into two parts, irrigating the fertile black soil of the area. The village, bordered by high mountains in the south and north, is about

three *li* wide and a dozen *li* long, which gives it the shape of a trough. The weather is blazingly hot here. Even in winter, one feels sticky in a single tunic, yet he will shiver with cold if he goes to the summit of the mountains. The river and the hot weather combine to endow the area with rich natural resources, and the crops do far better than in the fields of the neighbouring villages.

Why is the weather so hot in Black Bottom, and why does the water flow from the Yenkang Mountain? Thereby hangs a beautiful story which has long been popular among the Nung people.

It happened many, many years ago. On a night following the autumn harvest, the sky was sprinkled with gleaming stars and a gentle breeze blew. In the lamp-lit wooden houses the old people sat beside their warm *huotang* (a bed built with stones which can be heated underneath and is equipped with devices for cooking), discussing what to buy after the autumn harvest. The children were playing hide-and-seek among the mounds of grain on the threshing ground, while the lads were enjoying a tête-à-tête with their girls in the groves outside the village.

As the moon was setting, the tired children came in to sleep, and the singing and laughter of the young people in the groves gradually faded. Suddenly, a red shooting star fell from the sky. In a flash a tremendous explosion took place. It was as if the earth

had split asunder. The villagers woke from their dreams. A huge sheet of flame enveloped the village and immediately there was a hail of glittering sparks. In no time the wooden shacks, grain-mounds and trees were swallowed up in a sea of fire. The whole village was thrown into panic, the cries of men, women and children mingling with the neighing of horses, the screams of animals and the thud of falling houses.

Not a single person in the village escaped from the disaster. The fire had reduced everything to ashes. Only four young couples escaped; deeply immersed in their love-making in the groves outside the village and oblivious of the passing hours, they had forgotten to return home. They hurried to a rocky hill on the left wing of the village to wait for the fire to subside. One day passed; then another. The fire still raged. One year elapsed; then another. The fire still burned, wiping out all life, and turning the light brown earth to charcoal black. Wisps of acrid smoke kept drifting out from the dead village. They could do nothing.

They fled to hill country forty *li* from Black Bottom, there settled in new homes. In time they married and brought up children. Life was very hard for them.

One year, their village was struck by drought. Not a drop of rain did they have for nine months on

end. The water in the ponds went dry; the ground was criss-crossed with cracks into which one could thrust a hand; the trees were denuded of leaves; the crops dried and died in the fields—not even the drought-resistant potatoes survived.

There was a sturdy young man in the village named Yenkang. He was brave and clever. He had an old mother and a newly-betrothed fiancée named Loying who was the daughter of Uncle Lu, his next-door neighbour. The two families were on good terms, and visits were frequent between them.

Early in a morning, Yenkang went to a place seventy *li* from the village to fetch water, a couple of covered pails slung from a golden bamboo-pole across his shoulder. The bamboo-pole, shining as if it had been covered with a layer of gold, was patterned with brown dots. It was solid and elastic enough to stand a load of several hundred catties. Whenever he went out, Yenkang took it with him.

On his way home he saw the crops lying dead in the fields. He halted to take up a spot of dry earth. When he kneaded it with his fingers it immediately became a fine powder. "If the weather keeps on like this," he thought, frowning, "what will we eat in winter?"

Night had fallen when he reached the incline leading to the village. He heard Loying greet him from the path:

"Yenkang, have you brought the water?"

"I have, Loying!" he hastened to reply. The sight of her cheered him up.

Together they made towards the village. Followed by his fiancée, the young man went swinging along, the two pails suspended from his shoulder pole.

Uncle Lu was chatting away with Yenkang's mother at the latter's home. On seeing Yenkang they rushed to meet him. He stood the pails on the floor, took two gourds, bailed out two full ladles of water and gave them each one. Though the water was discoloured, the two old people drank it with as great a relish as if it were crystal-clear spring water. While doing so they kept saying, "How thirsty I am! How thirsty I am!"

Loying helped the old woman carry the water into the kitchen to cook the supper of wild vegetables.

After they had gone, Yenkang told Uncle Lu what he had seen in the parched fields.

"Uncle, let's leave this place for another where we can eat better and wear better!" he said.

Uncle Lu pondered gloomily and said: "Well, Black Bottom is just the sort of place!"

Yenkang stared in bewilderment. "Is your head affected with the heat, Uncle? Black Bottom is a fire hell! How can we live there? You must know that even the stones there were burned up."

Then Uncle Lu told him the story of how Black Bottom was consumed.

The story finished, he paused for a long time. Then, he sighed deeply, and added: "One year an old wizard came to this village. He told us that there was a Water Source Mountain far, far away from Black Bottom. On this mountain was a Water Source Pond in which was hidden a Water Pearl by which the fire could be quenched. But the pond was inhabited by an enormous golden spider which had woven a web and sealed the pond's outlet. To get the pearl, he said, first of all we would have to go to the Flower Mountain far, far away. On this mountain lived a queen-bee. It was necessary to obtain her golden sting with which to kill the spider.

"When they heard the wizard's story," Uncle Lu continued, "two young men of our village set out to get the pearl. They failed. One died on his way back; the other died shortly after he came home."

No sooner had Uncle Lu finished than Yenkang blurted out: "I'll go!"

Both Yenkang's mother and his sweetheart, who had come in after they had had their meal, were taken aback.

"You really mustn't go!" the old woman said, her eyes full of tears. "Didn't you hear that Uncle Lu said the two young men died?"

"We'll all die of hunger if we do not get the pearl," Yenkang replied. "You know what we are eating now. After a few more days the grass-roots and leaves all will have been eaten. If we can get the pearl, we may have a better life."

Seeing how determined Yenkang was, Uncle Lu could not help but admire him. "You don't have to worry about your mother—we'll take care of her," Uncle Lu said. "But you must be careful when you go into the pond."

The old woman insisted no more, but kept on crying.

The news of Yenkang's quest created a sensation among the villagers. Next morning they flocked to his house to see him off. They gave him buckwheat-cakes as rations. Loying put some fried, crisp bee-pupae, which Yenkang and herself had gathered, into his pocket.

At sunrise, having said good-bye to his mother, Uncle Lu, Loying and the villagers, Yenkang set out westward for the Flower Mountain, the golden pole on his shoulder.

He walked and walked all through the day and night, crossing many big rivers and scaling numerous high mountains. When he was hungry he ate wild fruit, and when he was thirsty he drank water from the streams. Although he was so tired that his bones ached, he never lost heart. One day, he came to the

foot of a mountain which towered high into the sky. Fleecy clouds dotted the hillside. The whole atmosphere was balmy with the fragrance of flowers. "Maybe this is the Flower Mountain," he thought. So he started to climb, clutching at the grass and twigs. After three days and nights he finally reached the summit. He looked around. Not far from the peak towered a mountain, clothed with grass and decked with all sorts of strange wild flowers. This really *is* the Flower Mountain! he decided. Overjoyed, he set his face towards it. When he was half way up, he felt a sharp sting on his face. He looked up—three wild bees were hovering over his head. After chasing them off with his pole, he went on. When he got nearer he saw countless bees buzzing from flower to flower. His heart sank. How can I find the queen-bee among so many? he thought.

He sat down, turning over in his mind how to deal with these creatures humming around him. Although he thought hard, he could not find a satisfactory solution. He slipped his hand into his pocket and touched something rough. He produced it—it was part of the fried bee-pupae given to him by Loying. In his eye's mind he saw Loying standing before him, and a new store of strength welled up in him. He remembered how they had chased away the bees with smoke the year before last, when Loying and he had gone to the

mountains to gather honey. "I will use this method again to disperse the bees and get the sting of the queen," he decided. As he rose and looked around he realized that, except for a Dragon Tree, with its luxuriant leaves there was not another tree on the mountain; not a dry stick, not a single dead rush. How could he find something to burn?

While he was puzzling, he heard the flapping of wings, followed by the caw of a crow. He looked up. A big hawk was flying over with a young crow between its claws. A frenzied old crow was pursuing it. Yenkang took his pole and threw it at the hawk. It struck the hawk's head. The hawk loosened its hold and after fluttering its wings fell to the ground. The young crow flew away.

The old crow hovered over Yenkang's head for a moment, and then spoke in a human voice: "Thank you very much, young man. Had it not been for you, I would have lost my little one."

Yenkang did not respond. He was worrying about the firewood, his head bent.

"Young man, have you encountered any difficulty? Why don't you speak? If you have any difficulty, out with it. I will help you!"

Realizing that the crow was anxious to help him, Yenkang told of the difficulty of getting the firewood he needed.

"Ha!" the crow exclaimed. "To get firewood is not a difficult job. The mountain will be piled high with dry wood in a few minutes, I give you my word."

Having said this, it circled high and cawed. In a twinkling a flock of crows flew from all directions, darkening the sky. The old crow gave out a few more caws, and the birds fanned out over the surrounding area. In a few minutes they were back and the whole space near to Kenyang was piled high with dry twigs and rushes.

Yenkang jumped for joy. But his happiness was short-lived. Now he had the firewood, but where could he find a light? He began to worry. At home, the fire was buried under the *huotang* for use at all seasons of the years. When it was called for, one had only to breathe upon it and one had a light. But where could he find a *huotang* here? Slowly an idea dawned on him. He remembered that once, in pursuit of a big wolf in the mountains, he had whirled his bamboo-pole and struck with all his force at the beast. He had missed and the pole had, instead, struck a big greenish rock. Sparks had been given off and had set fire to the tinder around.

He picked up a flint and struck a spark which he fanned into a blaze. He lit a dry twig and, holding it in his hand, set fire to the piles of firewood gathered by the crows.

Wisps of heavy smoke went curling upward. The sky was blanketed with a red glow from the flames. Some of the bees were burned, others fled. Yenkang made straight for the Dragon Tree. A bee-hive was hanging on it. He swung his bamboo-pole and gave the hive a hard blow. It broke. The queen-bee flew out from the hive in a panic, and in a second had disappeared.

Yenkang's plan fell through. He beat his chest and stamped his foot in despair. Presently, he heard the caw of the old crow. He raised his head. The crow was flying towards him, holding the queen-bee about the size of a sparrow in its mouth. He rushed to it and took the bee. He ripped its body open, and a shining, golden sting was revealed.

Carefully Yenkang kept it in his pocket and made for the east. He walked and walked for he did not know how many days. After much difficulty finally he reached the Water Source Mountain.

The thickly forested Water Source Mountain was a desolate place infested with serpents and wild beasts and overgrown with thorns and green moss.

Anxious to get hold of the pearl to free his people from starvation, Yenkang doubled his pace towards the desolate, ancient forest, brandishing his bamboo-pole. He found the Water Source Pond in a low-lying place deep in a cleft in the hillside. It was fringed with willows. The entrance to it was closely

sealed by a big web spun by the golden spider. From the bottom of the pond came a steady flow of bubbles like strings of blue pearls. When he neared the pond, a current of cold air surrounded him. He shivered. A golden spider, the size of a dish, stood guard over the pond, its eyes shining malevolently. Yenkang whirled his pole and brought it down hard. It missed the spider and bounced some twenty metres. Not a hair of the spider was hurt—in a flash it had slipped under the web. As he bent to pull the web to pieces, his hands became tightly entangled and held as if in handcuffs. He utilized every ounce of his strength but he could not draw them out. The spider came out of hiding. It was about to bite Yenkang with its poison fangs, when, with a final super-human effort, Yenkang lay prostrate on the web, produced the sting from his pocket and thrust it deep into the spider's eyes. The spider collapsed and fell into the pond. Yenkang and the web went also. But now the web was loosened. Yenkang tore himself clear and plunged to the bottom of the pond.

In vain he felt for the pearl. He went numb with cold from head to foot. He was puzzled and undecided, when he saw a blue light gleaming in a pile of white sand. He dug into the sand, and a lustrous blue pearl showed! When he held the pearl in his hand, the joints of his palm immediately froze with cold. Then he put it in his mouth, which also im-

mediately was numbed. As he gasped for breath, the pearl slipped down into his stomach. He felt as if his heart was frozen, and his blood had ceased to circulate. He lost consciousness.

When he came to, he found he had become a giant, swollen all over. He was so tall that the water of the pond, which had a moment before been the height of several men in depth, now only reached his knees. When he opened his mouth, a fountain spurted out dozens of feet away. Then he remembered the drought at home, so he set out for home with great strides.

Nothing on the way could bar him. When a tree stood in his way, he needed only to push it lightly to make it fall and make way for him. When a high mountain barred him, he just stepped over it. In less than half an hour he was already in the great mountain to the east of Black Bottom. Swollen with water his belly ached so sharply that he could not hold out any longer. He lost his foothold and, with his mouth open, dropped to the ground. The water flowed from his mouth into Black Bottom in an endless stream.

That day, the villagers on the rocky hill heard the roaring of water from Black Bottom. Then, clouds of mist arose, and rain fell in a deluge.

After three days and nights the sky cleared and the mist dispersed. It was not so hot as before in the area around Black Bottom. The villagers rushed to the place and saw crystal-clear water flowing from the mountain in the east. They traced their way to the source of the water. There they found Yenkang. His body had become the ridge of the mountain, his head its peak and his mouth a fountain from which clear water flowed in an endless stream. Both the mountain and the stream were named after him.

Once again Black Bottom was inhabited. It was clad in green from one end of the year to the other, and became even more beautiful and richer than before. Birds sang cheerfully from morning till night; the scorched soil had become fertile black earth blanketed with colourful flowers. The Nung people who had moved to the rocky hill returned to the place inhabited by their forefathers to lead a well-fed, happy and prosperous life.

The Dragon King of Langchiung[1]

(A Story of the Pai People)

1. The Dragon King as a Snake Killer

It is generally believed that the Dragon King of Langchiung was the son of Tuan Tai Kung, an old man living in Hoking, Yunnan. He had many descendants and the whole family lived on his retail business. When business was good, the family got on tolerably well; when business was poor, they had to shift as best they could.

The Dragon King was third in seniority among his brothers and was therefore known as Lao San (No. 3). Lao San was straightforward, hot-tempered and cared little about manners. His father did not like him.

[1] Now Erhyuan, western Yunnan.

One day Lao San said to his father: "I want to go out and make my own living."

"Good! You have my blessing," his father replied. "But remember, don't come home unless you can bring back fifty chests of silver."

So Lao San went away and wandered here and there with no particular place in mind as his destination. He begged his meals and washed his clothes himself. His supply of clothes was scanty. When he put on a clean pair of pants, the pair taken off had to be immediately laundered. Thus one frequently saw him carrying a staff on his shoulder with a pair of wet pants slung on it. After travelling for several days he arrived in Yungchang[1] where there was a silver mine. At this particular period the deposit appeared to have been exhausted and no silver had been recovered for a long time. The mine was on the verge of bankruptcy. The people working in the mine were greatly worried. They had tried to get a more qualified manager but without success. So they decided to see a fortune-teller and ask his advice.

"Pretty soon a man carrying a banner will pass by your mine," the fortune-teller announced, "and he will be your manager."

The people of the mine stood straining their eyes looking into the distance, anxious to see any ap-

[1] Now Paoshan, western Yunnan.

proaching figure which might be their new manager. Sure enough it was not long before they saw a man clothed in rags coming along the highway. He carried a staff on which was slung a pair of old pants.

"Can this be our new manager?" one miner whispered to another doubtfully. "Why, he looks more like a beggar than anything else; how could he be manager of a silver mine?"

"But," said another, "if he's really the man foretold by the fortune-teller, we can't afford to miss him. Anyhow, let's get him into our mine first and see what he can do; then we'll decide whether to let him be our manager or not."

So they all went forward and stopped Lao San. "Don't go any further, young man," they said, "stay here and work in our mine."

Lao San was very hungry and, as a matter of fact, had just been wondering where he could beg a meal. When he heard that these people wanted him to work in their mine, he thought this a good opportunity to solve the problem of his hunger. So he followed them and went into the building.

The miners asked Lao San to go with them to the mountains and tell them where there was silver.

Pointing at a place at random Lao San said: "Dig here and I'm sure you'll find silver." The miners immediately got busy with their picks and shovels. In the earth and gravel they saw something shining.

They looked at it closely. Lo! it was silver! The miners were elated.

Then Lao San pointed at other places at random and everyone proved to have the precious metal. Naturally the miners elected Lao San to be manager. From that time onwards the Yungchang silver mine became more and more prosperous.

Lao San ran the mine for several years and made a fortune for himself. One day, while looking over the silver in his possession he suddenly felt homesick. "It's a long time since I left my home," he said to himself. "If I can fill fifty chests with silver I can return home without incurring my father's displeasure. Let me see how much I've got."

Counting the amount of his silver on his fingers, he said to himself: "Enough, enough! My silver will easily fill fifty chests. Yes, now I can return home."

He bought fifty mules and put a chest on the back of each. With his mule caravan he set out triumphantly for his home. Several days later he arrived at the door of his father's house. Seated on his mule he counted the number of chests. Only forty-nine! He counted over and over again, but it was still forty-nine. He was greatly distressed. "A terrible mistake, a terrible mistake!" he reproached himself. "There are only forty-nine chests, so I cannot enter the house and see my father."

Of course Lao San had not made a mistake. He had merely neglected to count the chest on the mule he rode.

Lao San with his mules left his father's house to return to Yungchang. A few days later he arrived at Hsiakwan.[1] Abandoning his plan of returning to Yungchang, he stayed in Hsiakwan and founded a business.

At this time it was common talk in Hsiakwan that a Buddhist god was working miracles at Tiensheng-chiao (Natural Bridge).[2] It was said that as soon as incense was burned and obeisance made by a pious worshipper, he was instantly lifted to heaven body and soul. One day Lao San happened to pass by the bridge. He saw many people burning incense and kowtowing. As he watched them he actually saw them lifted up and disappear one by one. He felt greatly perplexed. This is certainly something strange, he thought. How can a man be lifted to heaven so easily and how can so many people enjoy such a blessing? Trying to find a solution to the puzzle, he hid himself in a place where his presence

[1] A county in western Yunnan, now the capital of the Pai People's Autonomous *Chou*.

[2] Tienshengchiao is one kilometre from Hsiakwan. It is really a natural rock formation in the form of an arch, hence its name. The water flowing below comes from the Erh Lake. The bridge leads to no point of importance and is used by very few travellers.

was not likely to be detected, and watched the procedure of the people's heavenward ascension.

He gazed upward to the place where the ascending worshippers disappeared. He noticed that high up on the precipitous cliff there was a cave from which a shining object protruded. He further noticed that the worshippers supposed to be going to heaven were really taken by that shining object. When he looked intently he recognized it to be the head of a huge snake. "Ah!" he said to himself, "it's not a god but a monster, and it has been killing the people. How can I bear to see people devoured by the monster? I must find a means to have it exterminated."

When he returned to Hsiakwan, he told the people that they must not go to Tienshengchiao again. "It's not a god but a man-eating monster," he declared.

The people did not know whether to believe him or not. But Lao San had a strong will and was not to be influenced by other people's doubts or fears. He bought several donkeys and loaded each one with a big sack of lime. With two sharp knives stuck into his belt he drove the donkeys to the bridge.

Lao San stood at the place where the pious worshippers burned incense, and kowtowed. One by one, he and his donkeys were promptly drawn up and swallowed by the snake. The lime carried by the donkeys soon played havoc with the inside of the monster and Lao San took out his knives and slashed

in all directions. The monster writhed with pain. After a short, futile struggle it fell out of the cave and dropped with a big crash at the bridgehead.

Lao San, however, died of the effects of his stay in the snake's belly. But his name was for ever remembered. The people honoured him with the title of the Dragon King of Erhyuan, with power over seven regions. As he was third in seniority among his brothers, he was also known as Third-Lord Dragon King.

2. *The Dragon King of Langchiung and the Devil Dragon of Lanpanchiao*[1]

Formerly on the first and fifteenth of the first moon in every year the Dragon Kings of all places used to gather in the mansion of Chang Tien Shih (Chang the Heavenly Teacher) in the capital, and the Dragon King of Langchiung was, of course, no exception. Once, at this time of the year, Tao, a *Chin-Shih*[2] from the northern suburb of the county seat of Langchiung, and another *Chin-Shih* from Lanpanchiao came to Chang Tien Shih's mansion for a visit.

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[1] The name of a place in western Yunnan. There are many ponds in the place covered with deep mud. People often mistake it for land, walk on it and get buried there. Hence, the local saying "the Dragon King of Lanpanchiao is a treacherous man."

[2] One who has gained the third degree in the old imperial examination.

Being concerned about the life of the people of Langchiung the Heavenly Teacher asked Tao for some information. "How are the people of Langchiung getting along? Does the Dragon King there give them rain in time?"

"The Dragon King of Langchiung," said Tao, "is really the essence of goodness. He gives us rain whenever we need it. The weather of Langchiung is always just what the people want it to be and the people are prosperous and happy."

Turning to the *Chin-Shih* from Lanpanchiao, the Heavenly Teacher asked: "How about the Dragon King of Lanpanchiao? Are the people happy there?"

Shaking his head, the Lanpanchiao scholar said: "I hate to say it, but the Dragon King of Lanpanchiao is really the worst kind of creature in the world. He constantly devastates our crops by floods."

Pausing for a moment, the Heavenly Teacher turned to Tao and said: "You said the Dragon King of Langchiung is very good—do you wish to see him?"

"But he is a spiritual being," said Tao, "how can a man see him with corporeal eyes?"

"If you want to see him, I can let you see him," said the Heavenly Teacher.

Pointing at a servant who had just come in, he added: "This man is the Dragon King of Langchiung."

Tao looked at the man and saw that he wore a grass raincoat and a green straw hat and was barefooted. He had come in to serve tea. Seeing that there was a guest in the room, he went out and brought in another cup and placed it before Tao.

Tao looked at the Dragon King and felt sorry for him. So he knelt down before the Heavenly Teacher and said: "He is a good Dragon King. He has done his duty well and is really a blessing to the people. I implore you, Heavenly Teacher, to free him from yearly service in your mansion."

The Heavenly Teacher granted Tao's request and removed the service badge from the Dragon King's coat.

The Dragon King of Lanpanchiao heard everything. He bore a grudge against the scholar from Lanpanchiao because the latter drew such an ugly picture of him.

The Heavenly Teacher knew what was going on in the evil Dragon's mind. Taking a ragged shirt, he said to the scholar, "Put this on at once. Don't scorn this dirty, ragged shirt, it will protect you from danger. Wear it close to your body."

The scholar looked at the shirt and saw that it was exceedingly dirty. He put it on with great reluctance, and left the Heavenly Teacher's mansion. After having travelled for some distance, he could no longer bear the thought of the dirty shirt next to his skin.

Seeing nobody around, he undressed, took off the dirty shirt, and threw it into the weeds.

The Dragon King of Lanpanchiao had been following him, but dared not attack him while he wore the magic shirt. When the shirt was thrown away, the Dragon swooped on the scholar and clawed him to death.

3. A Tea Bean

The Dragon King of Langchiung felt very grateful to *Chin-Shih* Tao. Before he returned to Langchiung, he waited for Tao at the door of the Heavenly Teacher's mansion and hoped to have a talk with him. When Tao came out of the mansion he went forward and addressed him.

"You are the only man who has understood me," he said. "I don't know how I can ever repay your kindness. From now on we shall be good friends. Whenever you need help in anything just turn to the direction of Langchiung and call 'Lao San' three times. When I hear you calling my name, I will come to you immediately and offer you my services." Having said this, he bade Tao good-bye.

One day the Emperor gave an audience to Tao and some other scholars. As His Majesty was exceedingly pleased with Tao's elegant and graceful man-

ners, he ordered the eunuch to serve the scholar with tea, into which he dropped a horse-bean. Now this bean was called "tea bean." It was given by the Emperor only to his favourite ministers and was considered to be an auspicious sign. To swallow it was considered to be the correct thing, and anyone honoured by it should immediately express his gratitude.

Tao was ignorant of all this. As horse-beans were the main produce in the spring harvest of Langchiung where the scholar came from and were a most common kind of pulse in that place, he never suspected the significance of the Emperor's action. Instead, he thought it a foreign substance that had got into the tea and spat it on the ground.

The Emperor, of course, considered this lèse-majesté. He was very angry and glared at Tao.

Tao realized that he had made a serious blunder. He knelt before the Emperor and asked forgiveness.

"Pardon me, Your Majesty," Tao implored. "I did not know that the horse-bean was bestowed upon me by Your Majesty. Horse-beans are very common in Langchiung; they can be seen everywhere. They are so common that they are even used to feed horses and pigs. I really did not know that they were so rare here."

"If what you have said is true, I shall pardon you," said the Emperor. "But if what you have said is

false, I will see that you get the punishment you deserve."

The Emperor sent a minister to Langchiung to make investigations. While waiting in the capital for the minister to return, Tao was exceedingly worried. "It is winter now," he thought, "how can there be horse-beans in Langchiung? If the minister sent by the Emperor finds no horse-beans there, then my fate will be sealed." The more he thought, the more worried he was.

Suddenly he remembered what the Dragon King had told him when they parted at the door of the Heavenly Teacher's mansion. "Lao San, Lao San, Lao San," he called. Immediately he heard the wind blowing, and in another instant his friend the Dragon King was standing before him.

"What can I do for you, my dear friend?" said the Dragon King.

Tao told the Dragon King what had happened. He said that a great misfortune had befallen him because he had spat out an imperial gift, the "tea bean," and he had said beans would be everywhere in Langchiung, whereas, at this time of the year, none would be seen. He also told his friend that the Emperor had sent a minister to investigate the case.

"My life is in danger," Tao said, "please help me."

"It is now early first moon," said the Dragon King, "and the minister sent by the Emperor won't arrive

in Yunnan until the end of the third moon. As horse-beans are harvested in Langchiung at the end of the third moon, he will find horse-beans everywhere when he arrives at the place. Be therefore at ease and have no fear, my friend!"

At the end of the third moon the minister arrived in Langchiung. As the Dragon King had foreseen, horse-beans were being harvested and masses of them were to be seen lying everywhere in the fields. The minister reported to the Emperor what he had seen in Langchiung, and the Emperor immediately granted Tao a pardon.

4. Friendship Between the Dragon King and Chin-Shih Tao

Having returned to Langchiung from the capital, Tao was very anxious to visit his friend the Dragon King. As dragons are supposed to inhabit the seas, he wondered how he could make the visit. So he stood by the seaside and called "Lao San" three times. The Dragon King immediately appeared before him. He was told to close his eyes. He did so and he was soon carried to the Dragon King's palace in the sea. Thereafter, intercourse between them was frequent and their relation became very intimate.

Once, on the day of the Clear and Bright Festival, Tao invited the magistrate of his county to a feast. When all the guests had been seated the magistrate noticed that the seat of honour was left vacant. He felt perplexed and wondered for whom the seat was reserved. "Although Tao is a better scholar than I," he thought, "he is now in his own county and under my jurisdiction. If he does not offer the seat of honour to me, to whom else could he offer it?" The more he pondered, the more perplexed he became.

The guest of honour arrived. He wore a grass raincoat and a shabby hat. "It's ridiculous," the magistrate thought, "that a rustic wearing such poor clothes should take the seat of honour."

The late-comer was quite at ease. He made no comment but took the seat of honour unceremoniously. He did not talk with anybody and ate as if he was alone in the room. The magistrate felt greatly displeased though he said nothing. When the meal was over, he bade good-bye to his host and went away very disgruntled. Tao, however, paid no attention to the magistrate's evident dissatisfaction. He let the magistrate depart without making any move to ask him to stay longer, as etiquette usually required a host to do. But he asked his friend the Dragon King to stay and they went together to the family burial ground for performance of the usual ceremony of ancestral worship at such time of the year.

Arriving at the place, Tao felt thirsty. He looked around but could not find any water.

"People say that wherever a dragon goes, water goes too," said Tao. "You are a Dragon King, can you get some water for me?"

"To have water in the graveyard is not a good thing," said the Dragon King, "but if you must have some drinking water, I'll get some for you." Saying this, he took from his pocket a small box in which were two mudfish. He threw them on the ground, one on each side of the graveyard. They immediately went into the ground and two streams of clear water issued forth from the places of their entrance. Tao squatted down and drank his fill from one of the springs.

The two places where water issued forth later became two wells which are still there. At the bottom of the wells are many small mudfish wriggling around. In appearance they are rather different from ordinary mudfish, having a silvery, shining skin. It is, however, difficult to catch sight of them, as they are very sensitive and immediately disappear into the mud at the slightest disturbance. If one wants to see them one has to do it stealthily and in the quietest manner possible.

5. The Dragon King Shows His True Form

Once the Dragon King invited Tao to visit him in his palace in the sea. As they went along on their way, Tao felt tired because the roads of Langchiung were bad and made travel difficult.

"I'm tired," said Tao to his friend, "let's take a rest."

"No need to rest," said the Dragon King, "I can make your travel very easy."

"Let me see how you do it."

"Close your eyes, creep into my sleeve, and I'll carry you to my palace."

Tao did accordingly. Soon he heard the roar of sea waves and shortly afterwards, they arrived at their destination. The Dragon King released his friend from his sleeve.

Tao opened his eyes and saw that he was in a magnificent palace. A feast was given in his honour with all kinds of delicacies. While they were enjoying the feast, Tao broke out with a request: "You have been very kind to me and have done many things for me," he said. "But I have never seen you in your true form. It will be a great favour if you can let me have a look at it."

"I will do anything for you, my friend," said the Dragon King with a serious look, "but to show you my true form, that is one thing which I can't do."

Tao insisted.

Unwilling to disappoint his friend, the Dragon King said, "All right then, this is how I look in my true form." Suddenly a small brown eel appeared in a dish on the table. It swam to and fro for a while, and then resumed human form again.

"Eels are nothing," said Tao, "I've seen hundreds and thousands of them. What I want to see is a real dragon."

"I'll let you see what a real dragon looks like after the meal," said the Dragon King. "But when I have assumed my true form, you must remain calm and not be frightened."

After the meal the Dragon King took his friend to an empty room on the sea coast. It had an opening over which had been pasted perforated white paper. Then he went to a watchtower, brought back a white cock, and gave it to Tao. "Now I'm going to change my form," he said. "You stand outside and look into the room through the holes on the white paper. When you see my true form and are frightened, throw the white cock into my mouth and call me by my name and I will assume human form again."

The Dragon King went into the room. Tao stood outside with the white cock in his hand and watched through the holes. As observation through the holes was imperfect and only sections of the Dragon's body could be seen, Tao, in exasperation, tore a part of the

paper screen and made a big aperture. With a flood of light streaming into the room, the Dragon was instantly metamorphosed into one of enormous size. It jumped out of the room, assuming a huge form with its head touching one mountain and tail another. Tao was terror-stricken, and died of fright before he had time to throw the white cock into the mouth of the Dragon.

Seven days later the Dragon again assumed his human form. He saw that his friend was dead. He took the corpse into his room and wept. But nothing could bring scholar Tao back to life.

Mourning Tao's death, the people of Langchiung set an image of him in the temple of the Dragon King. He was there after worshipped as a deity in company with his friend.

Local tradition sets the 23rd day of the seventh moon as the birthday of the Dragon King of the Tsepi Lake in Langchiung. On this day every year a big festival is celebrated on the lake. A stage is built on boats joined together, and plays are performed. People come from all directions, from places far, far away. They boat and watch the plays at the same time. This festival is held in commemoration of the friendship between the Dragon King of Langchiung and *Chin-Shih* Tao.

The Small Yellow Dragon and the Big Black Dragon

(A Story of the Pai People)

Long, long ago a rich man lived in a village near Tali, in Yunnan. The rich man had a young maid-servant. One day when the maid was washing vegetables in the valley she saw a green peach carried along by a hillside stream. She picked it up and ate it. A few weeks later she was pregnant. Why? Because the peach was not a peach at all, it was a dragon pearl.

The rich man's wife was enraged. "How shocking!" she shouted, "an unmarried girl pregnant! Shame on you!" She drove the girl out.

The unfortunate girl, wandering on the roads from day to day, could not find a place to shelter and rest.

The rich family had an old servant who did the domestic work. She was very kind-hearted. Moved by the suffering of the girl, she asked a farm-worker to put up a temporary shed in an isolated place outside the village. She kept it a secret from her master. Later the girl gave birth to a baby in the shed.

At the hour of childbirth a phoenix perched on the shed. It outstretched its coloured wings to shield the shed from wind and rain. When the young mother had carefully wrapped the baby the bird took wing and disappeared.

The young mother and her baby lived a hard life in the shed. Fortunately, a wealthy family nearby had a horse that ate only the grass reaped by this young woman. Thus she made a living for herself and her baby from this daily task.

While the young mother cut grass in the field she would leave the baby sleeping on a nearby ridge, covering him with a reed raincoat. As she was busy with her work she naturally had no time to attend to the baby. Whenever the baby cried a huge snake would creep to the ridge and nurse him. And that was how the baby was brought up.

So life went on for two years. In the third year the child was able to help his mother cut grass.

About this time the Big Black Dragon in Lake Erh near Tali realized that a precious robe of his was missing.

"Where's my robe?" he asked his wife, impatiently.

"I don't know," answered his wife.

The truth was that the Black Dragon's wife was in love with the Small White Dragon and she helped the latter take away the robe. The Big Black Dragon worked himself into a great fury about his missing robe. He blocked the outlet of Lake Erh to search for it. As the water in the lake could not escape they rose sharply, inundating vast stretches of farmlands and causing the loss of countless lives. Despite all this, the Small White Dragon kept the robe and refused to divulge its hiding place. The water level rose so high that even Black Dragon Bridge at Hsiakwan was submerged.

One day when mother and child returned from the field the child remarked: "The Big Black Dragon is crazy. His actions are resulting in so much damage and disaster that the people are panic-stricken. A notice, posted up in the county seat, says that anyone who can tame the Big Black Dragon will be highly awarded. Well, I'm going to have a try."

The young mother was greatly troubled at the rashness of her child. She tried to block the door, but he eluded her and ran away along the road.

When the child arrived at the county town he tore the notice from the board. The officer in charge was angered by the child's action and was going to chastise him, when the bystanders interposed. One

said: "Don't beat him. Bring him to the magistrate and let us see whether he can really bring the Big Black Dragon under control."

When the child was brought to the court the county magistrate was favourably impressed by his precocity.

"But you're so young, my child," he said. "How can *you* hope to tame the dragon?"

"I can do that, if you will prepare for me the things I need."

"What do you want?"

"I want a bronze dragon head-mask, two pairs of iron gloves with claws, six sharp swords, three hundred iron dumplings and three hundred steamed flour dumplings."

The child considered for a while and then added: "I need also three huge dragons made of straw. With all these things I'll surely capture the Big Black Dragon."

The magistrate ordered all these things to be got ready.

The child donned the bronze dragon head-mask, drew the gloves with iron claws on his hands and feet, held one sword in his teeth, fastened three on his back, and clenched a sword in each hand.

Then he addressed the crowd: "Throw the three straw dragons into the lake. Let the Big Black Dragon fight them until he is worn out."

He went on: "I will now plunge into the water. When yellow water comes up, throw me the flour dumplings; and when the black water appears, throw in the iron dumplings. After the Big Black Dragon is tamed, throw a tuft of grass into the lake, and erect a temple for me at the place where the grass drifts ashore."

As soon as the child leaped into the lake, he was instantly transformed into a small, yellow dragon and the battle started.

Waves and spray were thrown high up in the air. The local inhabitants of Tali rowed many boats in the wake of the surging waves. They shouted encouragement to the Yellow Dragon.

As a result of this effort the Yellow Dragon was hungry. No sooner had yellow foam gathered on the surface than he appeared, raised his head and opened his mouth as a sign that he wanted food. The people on the boats dropped flour dumplings into his mouth. The food gave the Yellow Dragon renewed strength.

Meanwhile, black foam began to appear on the water. The Big Black Dragon was also hungry. As he came to the surface, he raised his head and opened his big mouth. The people on the boats hurled in the iron dumplings. Needless to say, his hunger was not in the least appeased. Instead, he suffered acute pains in the stomach.

The fighting continued for three consecutive days, and the same process was repeated again and again. At last, the Black Dragon was exhausted. For a long time he kept his mouth open looking for food. It was at this moment that the Yellow Dragon, agile as a snake, slipped into the belly of the Big Black Dragon. Armed with his six sharp swords, he slashed about him. The Black Dragon could not stand the pain and turned and twisted convulsively in the lake. The people in their boats kept after him and cast iron dumplings into his open mouth from time to time. Eventually the Big Black Dragon gave in and pleaded for mercy:

"My dear Yellow Dragon, please come out! I can't bear the pain any longer. My belly is as if it was on fire: Come out, please! I'll run away and never come back. From now on you can rule the lake."

"All right! But from what place will you let me come out?" the small Yellow Dragon asked.

"From my bowels."

"No, that's an insult!"

"Well, will it be all right to come out from my nostril?"

"No, no! That's an insult, too."

"Will you come out from my ear?"

"Stop that nonsense! I'm not your ear-wax."

"Then creep out from my armpit!"

"You'd crush me should I come out that way!"

"Then from the sole of my foot."

"Your sole? You'd trample me to death."

In the meantime the Yellow Dragon made a few more slashes and the Black Dragon's pain was beyond enduring. "I can't stand the agony any longer, come out from my eye," he implored.

The Yellow Dragon removed one eye of the Big Black Dragon and emerged triumphant.

The one-eyed Black Dragon later made a tunnel through the rocks underneath the Kiang Feng Temple and escaped to the Nu River. The flood waters around Tali flowed down through the opening. Tradition has it that this opening is the present arch of the Tien-shengchiao at Tali.

The Yellow Dragon did not come back to the land after he had driven away the Black Dragon. The young mother called her son's name loudly on the lakeside and the only answer she got from the water was: "You go home, mother, I must stay here."

"If you can't come on land again, dear son, let me have a last look at your face," sobbed the mother.

He raised his head above the water. When his mother saw a dragon's head instead of her son's, she received such a shock that she died.

The people at Tali were greatly distressed at the death of the mother. They buried her and then threw some grass on the lake. The Yellow Dragon was transformed into a little snake; it crept on to the tuft of grass and floated away with the current. The grass stopped drifting when it reached Fenglo Pavilion. Accordingly, the people built a Dragon King's temple nearby.

They also erected a Dragon Mother's Ancestral Hall near the Three-Pagoda Temple. The Small Yellow Dragon was also worshipped as the local deity of Green Peach Village.

Three Episodes of Fanchiangshan

(A Story of the Miao People)

Fanchiangshan and the Yuanwai[1]

Fanchiangshan worked for the Yuanwai as a farm labourer. Every day he got up at dawn and returned from the fields at dusk. He was so tired from work that, at the end of the day, he tottered rather than walked. Whereas the Yuanwai feasted on meat and beancurd every day, Fanchiangshan had only the poorest kind of food, generally boiled corn with a little bit of salted peppers. Even during the New Year and other holidays, or when doing heavier work, such as the transplanting of rice, he was allowed no

[1] Popular title for a rich man.

more than a bowl of rice with salted peppers and a dish of beancurd with vegetables. Fanchiangshan knew that he was underpaid for his labour, and had long harboured a grievance against the landlord. Also he craved for better food.

At transplanting time, Fanchiangshan planned to have his wish fulfilled. He knew the Yuanwai had a fat pig. And it was the landlord's possession of the pig which Fanchiangshan thought would make it possible for him to carry out his plan.

One evening, when the day's work was over, he had a talk with the Yuanwai. "You have too much land," he said, "and the work of transplanting is far beyond the power of a single person. Why not get some labourers to help?"

"But," said the Yuanwai, "the employment of farm labourers would cost a lot of money and I can't afford it. I have confidence in your ability and I'm sure you won't mind making a bigger effort."

"But you must know if the rice seedlings are not transplanted in time you will suffer a great loss," Fanchiangshan warned him.

"I wonder," the Yuanwai said inquiringly, "if there are labourers who are willing to work for meals only."

"What a miser this man is," Fanchiangshan thought. "Does he really believe that there are such foolish people in the world?" But he was careful not to tell the Yuanwai what he thought. "Yes," he said,

"some peasants are willing to work for no pay. But they want to be well fed. If you could feed them with your fat pig, I'm sure they would come and work for you."

"I have kept the fat pig for my New Year feast," said the Yuanwai shaking his head. "And you want me to kill it for ordinary farm-workers. You're crazy!"

"Whether to kill the pig or not is, of course, up to you," said Fanchiangshan. "But I only want to remind you that without meals of pork no one would come."

The Yuanwai was silent. Obviously, he was doing some mental arithmetic. Fanchiangshan knew what the Yuanwai was thinking and pressed his point.

"Certainly the advantages and disadvantages of losing the pig should be carefully weighed in the balance." Fanchiangshan spoke as if he was completely disinterested. "But, of course the pig is not worth as much as the amount which would be saved. If I were you, I would not hesitate a moment, but would kill the pig and invite the farm-workers to a feast. It would be throwing a sprat to catch a whale."

Eventually Fanchiangshan's "reasoning" convinced the Yuanwai, who consented, though not without reluctance, to have his fat pig killed.

Next day Fanchiangshan had a cauldronful of roast pork ready. He was about to take it to the

fields when the Yuanwai came to make sure that his pig had not been killed in vain.

"Have they all come?" he asked anxiously. "I want to be sure to get my pig's worth."

"Look over there!" Fanchiangshan pointed to the fields in the distance. "Can't you see they are there already, seven or eight of them?"

The Yuanwai looked in the direction pointed by Fanchiangshan's finger and saw that there were really people in the fields, some wearing straw hats and some turbans. His anxiety vanished and, without more ado, let Fanchiangshan take away the meat.

As soon as Fanchiangshan reached the field he sat down for a sole feast. But what of the farm-labourers? There were none. What the miserly landlord saw and thought were human beings were actually straw figures Fanchiangshan had rigged up the night before. The Yuanwai was well and truly duped.

For many days Fanchiangshan ate the pork. As to the work of transplanting he did it himself; and of course progress was slow. No peasant working for a landlord is enthusiastic about work, and Fanchiangshan was no exception to the rule. "When a farm-labourer is not thinking of the middle of the day, he is thinking of the middle of the month," so a common saying goes.

Not so with the landlords of course. Although the Yuanwai did no work himself, he always insisted that

other people work as speedily as possible. One sunny day, oiled-paper umbrella in hand, he came to the fields to see how the labourers were getting along with the work. He went through the fields but could see nobody but Fanchiangshan. Many of the fields had not been planted. He was furious.

"Where are the workers?" the Yuanwai roared. "Tell me, why are you working here alone?"

"The workers all suffered from food poisoning and returned home," said Fanchiangshan.

"Why did they all suffer from food poisoning?" the Yuanwai asked suspiciously.

"The meat of your pig wasn't good," Fanchiangshan explained.

The Yuanwai was so furious that for a long time he could not speak. Then, struck with a thought, he asked Fanchiangshan: "Why, then, were you not sick?"

"I had too much of your salted peppers," said Fanchiangshan. "My insides were so hot that the germs hadn't a chance."

The Yuanwai could say nothing. He opened his oiled-paper umbrella and, filled with silent rage, went home.

Fanchiangshan and the Custodian

Once during the Manchu dynasty a custodian was appointed by the government to take care of the *Tun Tsang*[1] or granary in the region inhabited by the Miao people. When the time came for the Miao people to hand in the grain, his attitude would become overbearing. "Without grain a nation is no nation"—was how he lectured them. He was always boasting of his loyalty to the government and his readiness to show gratitude to the emperor. Having taken by all manner of means the grain the peasants had harvested from the fields with infinite labour, and put them in the granary, he would then sell a large proportion and swell his private purse.

Thus it came that the custodian became fatter and fatter while the people became thinner and thinner.

Once when the emperor was sending his troops to war, there was a shortage of provisions. An edict was issued, calling for the requisition of grain. The provincial judge acted immediately and left for the

[1] The *Tun Tsang* system was inaugurated during the reign of Emperor Chia Ching after the suppression of the revolt of the Miao people of Hunan Province. It was worked out by Fu Nai. Under this system most of the land of the Miao people was confiscated and used for the purpose of military colonization. A host of military officers with various titles — the custodian being one of them — were appointed to take charge of the work of military colonization. The result was a thorough system of oppression and exploitation of the Miao people.

granary of western Hunan for an inspection. The custodian found himself in a terrible fix: he had disposed of too much of the public grain and could think of no means to make good the deficit.

Having racked his brains without success the custodian finally decided to talk the matter over with Fanchiangshan. There were two reasons for his decision. First, he could not let his colleagues know of his fix because they, not having shared in the spoils, might expose him to his superiors. Secondly, he knew that Fanchiangshan was the cleverest and most resourceful young man among the Miao people, and that he was always ready to help others in trouble.

So the custodian went to see Fanchiangshan and asked him for help. He was most abject in his pleading. He told Fanchiangshan everything, then added: "My friend, you must help me, because the matter concerns military operations, and I could hardly expect anything less than a death sentence if I fail to hand in the full amount of grain."

"Yes, I can help you," said Fanchiangshan, "but I'm afraid you will not follow my advice."

"Tell me first what's your advice," the custodian inquired.

"Lung Yuanwai is very rich, why not go and steal some of his money? Then you can buy all the wheat necessary," Fanchiangshan suggested.

Assuming a self-righteous expression, the custodian remonstrated with Fanchiangshan. "Remember, I am a high-ranking government officer," he said. "I have the fifth-grade button and feather decoration on my hat and I wear the robe embroidered with four-claw dragons. How can I fall so low as to be a thief?"

"I knew you would not follow my advice," Fanchiangshan remarked, smothering a laugh. "Let's talk no more. There's nothing else I can do for you."

Fanchiangshan's refusal was a blow to the custodian. His anxiety increased. "Everybody knows that you are a clever man," he said in a seductive tone. "Can't you think of anything else but stealing?"

"Everybody knows that you are an honest officer," Fanchiangshan retorted, "but you stole from the granary?"

The custodian's face flushed; he could find no words for reply.

Fanchiangshan pressed his argument: "You're used to stealing, if many times in the past, why not once more?"

This was too much for the custodian. He felt like assaulting Fanchiangshan and having him arrested and tried for contempt of a government officer, but he was wise enough to suppress his feelings: he knew that this would immediately land him into trouble as such a trial would naturally expose everything. For Fanchiangshan, it would be at most an imprisonment

of a few days, but for him it would be something far worse.

Fanchiangshan, of course, knew full well that he could humiliate the custodian without bringing any harm to himself.

The custodian was now entirely at Fanchiangshan's mercy, for he had to rely on the latter to save his life. "I'll steal, if that is the only way to get me out of trouble," he said in a low voice, "but it must not be discovered."

Fanchiangshan pretended to comfort him: "Even if it should be discovered, what would it matter? People don't dare say anything when the thief is a government officer!"

"But still it can't be done," the custodian protested, "for Lung Yuanwai is my uncle and how could a nephew steal from his own uncle? Can't you think of some rich peasant from whom I may steal?"

"Rich peasants!" exclaimed Fanchiangshan contemptuously, emphasizing the "rich." "Why, even the soil on their land has been stolen. No, Lung Yuanwai is the only one from whom you can steal. Anyhow he got his wealth by stealing. It really isn't much of a crime to steal from him."

To save his own life the custodian had to accept Fanchiangshan's advice and steal from his relative. "I'll do as you say if there's no better alternative," the custodian said reluctantly. "But I've never

travelled in the night and I feel exceedingly nervous. Besides, there's the danger of meeting people on the way who might recognize me. Can you help me to get over these difficulties?"

"Oh, that's easy," said Fanchiangshan. "You are not so heavy; and I am very strong. You get into a gunny bag and I'll gather up the open end and tie it with a rope. Then I'll fling the sack over my shoulder and carry you to Lung's house. If anybody asks me what's in the bag, I'll say it's rice. Will that be all right?"

As the custodian could think of nothing better, he agreed.

Night came and everything went exactly as Fanchiangshan had planned. On the way the custodian swung in the bag like a pendulum, and as his bearer plodded along the minutes seemed to drag on like years. The torture became greater and greater until finally he could no longer bear it himself. "How much more of the way do we have to go?" he ventured to ask.

"Oh, quite a long way," came the reply.

"Hav . . . hav . . . haven't we ar . . . arrived . . . yet?" the custodian muttered in stifled tones, a little while later.

"No, but we'll soon be there," Fanchiangshan replied, suppressing a laugh.

"Re . . . re . . . remember to let me out at the door. Plea . . . se don't forget!"

"I certainly will," was Fanchiangshan's ambiguous response.

It was midnight when they arrived at Lung Yuan-wai's house. Although Fanchiangshan had promised the custodian he would let the latter out so that they could go on with their plot, he had no such intention. He let the custodian stay in the bag and sat down for a rest.

The custodian's body was now nothing but a mass of pains and aches and his head swam. Again he inquired stutteringly whether they had arrived at their destination. This time he got an affirmative answer. He sighed with relief and implored his carrier to release him: "Quick, quick!" he said, "I'm dying of suffocation!"

Fanchiangshan, however, was in no hurry. He addressed the custodian, "Let me ask you a question: If you die, are you going to steal again in your next life?"

The custodian was nonplussed. Not knowing what Fanchiangshan was driving at, he ignored the question and continued to implore his tormentor to release him.

Fanchiangshan swore. "Be silent! If you wake up the Yuanwai with your screeching, both of us will get into trouble."

Having frightened his captive into silence, Fanchiangshan continued his questioning: "Let me ask you another question. If one of the common people steals something from the government what kind of a sentence will he get?"

"The death sentence, of course," the custodian replied promptly.

"If an officer steals from the people, what sentence will he get?" Fanchiangshan then asked.

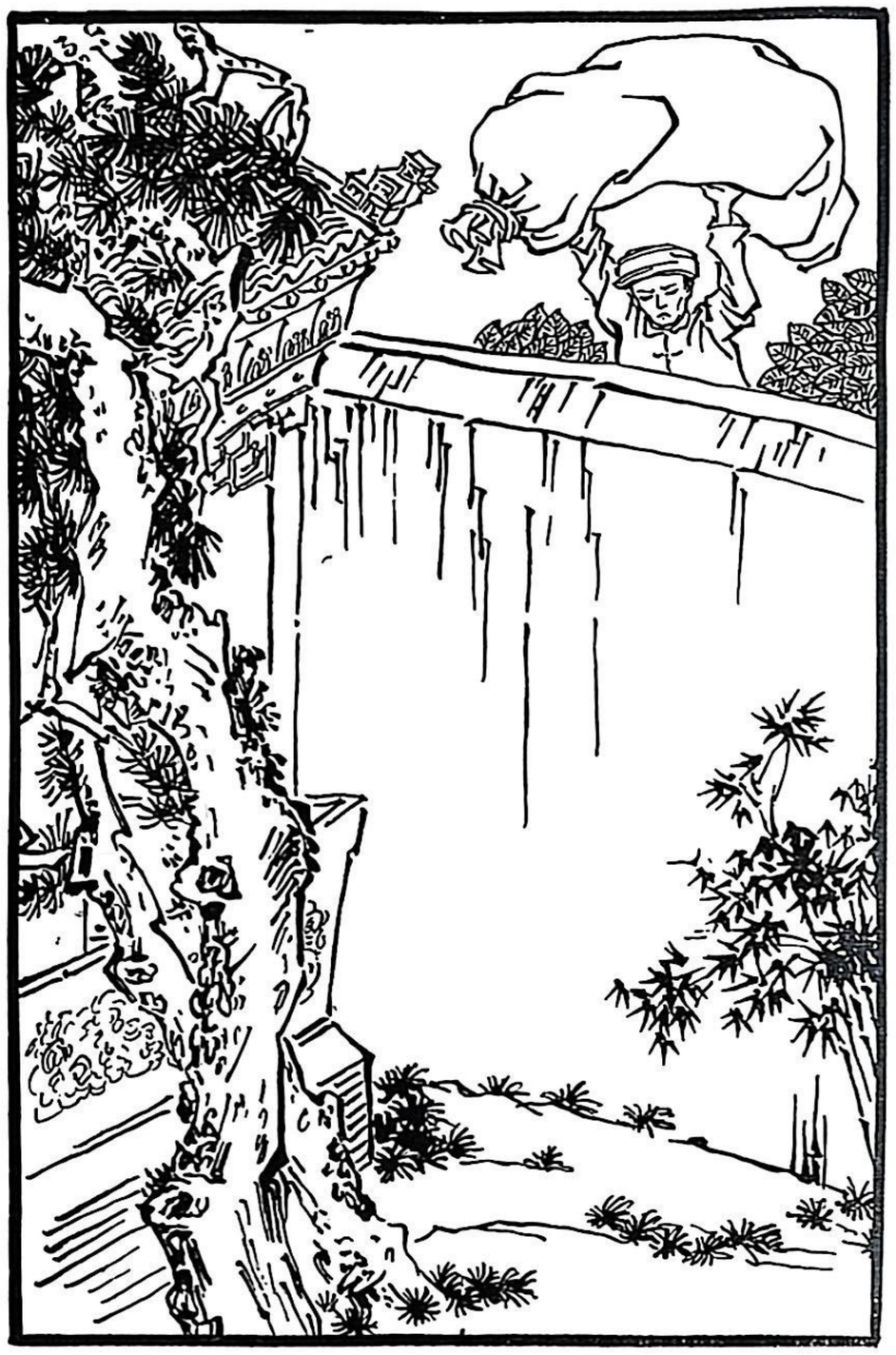
The custodian fidgeted and did not answer.

He was afraid that there was a catch in Fanchiangshan's question. He racked his brains for some kind of a response, but before he could think of one, Fanchiangshan said in an emphatic manner: "Let me give you the verdict—death!"

The custodian was so frightened that he broke into a cold sweat. Before he could yell a protest Fanchiangshan had lifted him up and thrown him over the compound wall into the courtyard of the Yuanwai's house. As he fell with a thud on the ground the Yuanwai and all his folk were awakened.

"Thief, thief!" the Yuanwai cried. At his shout his folk ran out with sticks, carrying poles, and other weapons.

The custodian wriggled in the bag and tried to escape but the bag was so strongly tied up that it was quite beyond his strength to open it. Meanwhile the crowd had drawn near.



"Save my life, save my life . . . " the custodian cried from the bag. "I'm not a thief, I'm the custodian!"

This put the Yuanwai in a fit of rage. "What! you dare to pretend to be the custodian! Thrash him! Thrash the dirty skunk."

Sticks and poles rained blows on the bag. The custodian writhed with the pain. "Stop! Stop!" he yelled. "Uncle Lung, I'm your nephew."

The Yuanwai's rage knew no bounds. "What, you're my nephew! You make me the uncle of a thief! Give him heavier blows!"

As the blows became heavier and heavier the custodian was badly wounded and blood flowed from many parts of his body. He was in black despair and no longer tried to convince them that he was the custodian or the nephew of Lung.

The blows continued with unabated violence until the custodian was beaten to death—a punishment he well deserved.

Fanchiangshan as a Judge

Once Old Ma and Old Shih went to Chienchou[1] to sell honey. Having sold all their stock they put up at an inn.

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[1] Now Chihshou, a small county in western Hunan, inhabited by the Miao people.

Lying in bed, talking over the day's business, they both were bitten with the thought that their silver they had got from their sales might be stolen during the night. After some discussion Old Ma suggested that the silver be put into the honey basket. "If a thief should break in, it is not likely," he said, "that he would think of valuables being hidden in such a receptacle."

As Old Shih could think of no better plan he agreed to the suggestion of his partner. So they got up, lit a candle, and put the silver in the basket.

"Walls have eyes"—a Chinese proverb says. Meaning, that one should always remember that eyes can peep through crevices, which was precisely what happened when Old Ma and Old Shih were hiding their silver. The proprietor of the inn and his wife were lurking outside the door at the time and they heard and saw everything. Greediness impelled them to steal. Late that night they furtively entered the room, took the silver from the basket, and put some stones in its place.

When Ma and Shih got up in the morning they looked into the basket to see whether the silver was still there and found it gone. Both wept. But as the gate of the inn was not yet open and there were no holes in the walls of the compound, they reasoned that the thief must have come from inside the inn. And as they were the only travellers putting up at the inn

that particular night, the thief they further reasoned must be no one else but the proprietor of the inn or his wife—or both of them.

When the innkeeper and his wife were told that silver had been stolen from their lodgers they were immediately thrown into great confusion.

"Heavens," they cried, "how unfortunate we are to have such a thing happen in our inn! The damage you suffer from losing your silver is small; but the damage we shall suffer from losing the good name of our inn is great. Quick, let's go to the sheriff."

So the four of them went to the sheriff who made a thorough inquiry into the case but could find no clue that would lead to a solution.

Fanchiangshan had entered and listened to the statements of the four. "I'm not competent to clear up this case," he said, "but the big drum of the Temple of the Heavenly King might be able to solve it."

"This is certainly strange," said the sheriff. "If I cannot solve the case, how in the world could an old temple drum do it?"

"This big drum," said Fanchiangshan, "is a magic drum. If carried by persons having a grievance it will sound itself." Turning to Ma and Shih he said: "You go and carry the big drum from the temple. If you have really lost your silver, as you say, then the drum will sound itself."

Old Ma and Old Shih immediately and eagerly agreed.

"Wait a minute!" Fanchiangshan stopped them as they were starting for the temple. "You must wear new clothes to show your sincerity. And remember, when you are carrying the drum you must not stop on the way if it doesn't sound itself."

Having said this, Fanchiangshan went out ahead of them.

Ma and Shih changed their clothes and went to the temple. They carried the big drum between them; it felt very heavy. They walked a fair distance without any sound coming from the drum.

Old Shih's shoulder blade began to pain dreadfully, and he was afraid he would wear holes in his new clothes. "It's all your fault," he grumbled, as they trudged on. "If we hadn't put the silver in the basket perhaps it would not have been stolen."

"It's useless to regret what has already been done," said Ma. "It's on the thief that we should lay the blame. The heartless scoundrel has stolen all our capital. Now we have nothing left and have to rely on this drum for redress."

At that very moment the drum sounded.

Ma and Shih were overjoyed. They carried the drum back to the temple and kowtowed to the image of the god, thanking him for his divine help.

Next day Fanchiangshan gave similar instructions to the innkeeper and his wife. "Yesterday," he said, "Old Ma and Old Shih carried the big drum and it sounded itself. This shows that they have really lost their silver. Now you two go and do the same thing. If you have not stolen the silver the drum will sound itself."

The keepers of the inn had a bad conscience and were reluctant to go to the temple. But refusal, they knew, would be tantamount to an acknowledgement of guilt, so they braced themselves and did as they were bid. Meanwhile they had the gravest doubts that the drum would sound itself.

In the afternoon the two donned new clothes and proceeded to carry out Fanchiangshan's instructions.

Like the two merchants they thought the drum exceedingly heavy. They had travelled a fair distance and no sound had come from it. Putting down the carrying pole the wife of the innkeeper sighed: "I don't think the drum will sound itself. We made a great mistake in stealing the silver."

"Regret is of no avail," said her husband. "What is stolen is stolen, and cannot be returned."

As he spoke, Fanchiangshan, who had been hiding in the drum, ripped open the skin with the drumsticks and crawled out of his hiding place. He had, of course, heard everything.

"You had better return the silver as quickly as possible," Fanchiangshan said to the culprits.

The latter acknowledged their guilt and did accordingly.

Old Ma and Old Shih, having got back their silver, felt very happy. From that time onward they were loud in their praise of the wisdom of Fanchiangshan, which they considered not only greater than that of the sheriff, but even that of the god of the temple.

Wives in the Mirrors

(A Han Story)

In a far-off place was a plain so vast that a galloping horse could not cover its breadth in ten days. It was a boundless expanse with the sky seemingly much broader than elsewhere. Through the misty horizon in the south-west loomed a group of green mountains. Many villages of different size were found on the plain. In one hamlet lived a kind-hearted old woman who had two handsome, clever sons both of whom were still unmarried. All day long, the old woman thought of nothing but getting her sons married so that she could have grandchildren around her. But the young men were not at all anxious about marriage and were unaware of what was always in their

mother's mind. The matchmaker did her best to help, rushing here and there to find ideal girls for the two young men, but to no avail.

The desire of the mother grew more intense with each passing day. Late one night, worrying about it, she got up and came out of the room. Although the sky was sprinkled with winking stars, all around was pitch dark. She looked up at the heavens and heaved a sigh. "Boys," she said in a tone of mild exasperation, "I really don't know what sort of girls you want!"

The old woman spoke in a low voice, but she thought that even the stars in the sky could hear, so quiet was the night. To her surprise, she noticed a brilliant mass of light rising in the south-west. Bigger than the moon, it came nearer and nearer, and then fell into her courtyard. She shut her eyes before the dazzling light. When she opened them, standing before her was an old man with a white beard and a dragon-headed stick. His figure was surrounded by a brilliant halo; he had a shiny face, kind and smiling. "I'm here to introduce your sons to their wives," he said in a ringing voice. As he spoke, his long beard quivered.

The old woman was not impressed. "I'm afraid, Immortal," she said sadly, "your efforts will have no result. No girls really please my sons, you know.

But, in any case, where are these girls? And where is the go-between?"

The old man burst into laughter until his long beard fluttered in the air. "There is no need for go-betweens or bridal chairs," he explained. "I've got two mirrors in which your future daughters-in-law can be seen. Don't think they are merely imaginary. No! They are real girls. On the third day of the third moon each year, when you so put the mirrors as to make them face the south-west at midnight, you will surely see the path leading to the whereabouts of your daughters-in-law."

So saying, the old man took out two small, round mirrors and handed them to the boys' mother. After that, the luminous mass rose and flew with the swiftness of a meteor away to the south-west until it was lost in the darkness.

The mother returned to her room and woke up her sons, to each of whom she gave a mirror presented by the Immortal. Looking into his mirror, the elder son saw a girl in red smiling at him. Then she hung her head and stared at a red peony in her hand. Forgetting that the girl was only a girl in the mirror, the elder son said to his mother: "Did you see her smile at me, Mother? She's the girl for me. Allow me to marry her, please."

His mother was perplexed, and did not know what to answer.

The second son looked into his mirror. There he saw a girl in green. She gave him a kind glance before lowering her head to look at a green peony in her hand. He also took the girl for a human being. Addressing his mother he said: "I know for certain, Mother, that she has fallen in love with me, just as I have fallen in love with her. Let us become husband and wife."

The mother was both happy and surprised. She could only say: "Don't be foolish, boys. They are only reflections in the mirrors. How can you marry them?"

At this, the elder son hung his head sadly. A frown furrowed the brow of the younger brother.

Several days had passed. But the two young men went about preoccupied and unhappy. Their mother decided to tell them what the Immortal had told her.

The third day of the third moon came. "Boys," she said to her sons, "I won't let you go together, no matter what you say. Who knows what will become of you if you go?"

"Let me go first, brother!" the elder son pleaded.

"Right," his mother agreed. "You're a few years older than your brother. It's better that you should go first."

When midnight came, the elder son took out his mirror and turned it towards the south-west. A flash of dazzling light lit the hazy mountains in that direc-

tion and there appeared many strange rocks and cliffs. The light penetrated as far as the mountain valley at the farther end, and then, in a flash, it turned into a bright path. Bidding his mother and brother farewell, the elder son set out on his journey along the path.

Before daybreak, he reached the end of the path and found himself at the foot of the big mountain. He continued on until he came to a brightly-lit stone cave on a precipice. An old man was sitting inside with crossed legs, a dazzling light radiating from him. The elder son recalled what his mother had told him, and decided that this must be the Immortal who had given the mirrors. So he approached and asked most respectfully: "Immortal, now I've reached the end of the path, where shall I go to find the girl?"

"You're a good boy," the old man praised him. "You've finally come here. That girl lives in the big mountain to the west. You'll have to pass the Mountain of Tigers and cross the River of Ogres in order to get there. The girl you seek is in the hands of an ogress who shut her in the back garden after turning her into a red peony. You'll have to enter the garden quietly and turn your mirror towards the girl so that she will be changed back into a human being. It's for you to decide whether you should go or not, my boy!"

"How can I go back empty-handed when I've already got this far?" exclaimed the elder son.

"Since you dare go," said the old man, "I'll be glad to help you." "Here is a whip and a bundle of thread, and I'll tell you how to use them. But be sure to remember, you must not disclose any nervousness when you put them to use."

The Immortal took out an ordinary whip and an ordinary bundle of white thread which he gave the elder son, telling him how to use them. Having pointed out the path he should follow, the old man disappeared.

Following the Immortal's advice, the elder son climbed a mountain by a winding trail. When he reached the top, he looked at the opposite hill on which were many strange-looking rocks which emerged from time to time through a pall of heavy, murky mist. After a brief pause, he headed for that awesome, ominous-looking mass. As he advanced, the path became more and more dangerous. In some places, it was so narrow that he seemed to be walking in mid-air. As he toiled along, soaked with perspiration, he saw, just in time, two giant tigers about to swoop down on him. Quickly, he flourished the whip given him by the Immortal. As the fierce animals prepared to spring, mouths open for their prey, he brandished his whip twice at them and shouted, as he had been told by the Immortal: "Away! you tiger-guardians of the mountain! I'm here to seek my dear one. Away with you!"

As soon as he finished, the tigers, greatly disconcerted, shut their jaws, bowed their heads and slunk away.

Now the elder son found himself atop another peak. Below was a broad stream with no rocks and trees around. In a few minutes, he reached the bank. Thereupon he took out the thread given him by the Immortal, loosened it and threw it into the water, shouting: "Listen, you ogres! I'm here to seek my dear one. Hurry and come out and build a bridge for me!"

The green waters began to surge violently and a number of water ogres emerged, some with fish-tail and the bodies of human beings, others with the heads of humans and the bodies of turtles. They picked up the thread and spread it across the water. Presently a narrow wooden bridge stretched over the stream.

The elder son stepped on to the bridge, wielding his whip. When he was near the middle of the bridge, however, he paused to look down into the water far below. The sudden sight of the ogres with their wide, blood-shot eyes sent him into a panic. His nervousness increased when he imagined what would be his lot should he slip from the narrow bridge and fall into the water. His legs trembled and his head whirled. Thereupon the bridge grew narrower and narrower, until it changed back into the thread

originally cast by him. He fell, and, together with the ogres, disappeared under the water.

A year passed. The mother still waited for her elder son to come home. Though she was reluctant to believe that anything bad had happened to him, and kept praying for his safety, she felt more and more worried.

Once again it was the third day of the third moon. "Mum," said the younger son, "on this day last year brother left us. So this year let me go to find my girl."

"What," his mother said in surprise. "Your brother hasn't come back yet. How can you think of going?"

"But I'll certainly come back, Mum," said the second son.

As the mother was anxious to know what had become of her elder son, she finally agreed, saying: "But be careful and come back whether you find her or not. And don't forget to search for your brother!"

The second son nodded.

At midnight, the younger brother came to the courtyard and turned his mirror towards the southwest. In the distance a brilliant light showed, which finally changed into a bright path leading to a big mountain at the farther end. The younger brother

said good-bye to his mother and set out on his journey along the path indicated.

Before dawn, he came to the end of the path where he, also, found the Immortal with an aura lighting his person. He, too, got a whip and a bundle of thread from the Immortal, who told the same things to the young wife-seeker, but adding: "Last year on the same date, your elder brother came, but he fell into the mountain stream full of water ogres. It's for you to decide whether you should go or not."

Having learned of his brother's fate, the younger brother felt sad and tears came to his eyes. But he said: "I'll go, whatever faces me."

At this, the Immortal showed him the way.

The younger brother passed by the Mountain of Tigers, wielding his whip with immediate effect. When he came to the mountain stream, he threw the thread into the river, saying: "Listen, you ogres! I'm here to seek my dear one. Hurry and come out and build a bridge for me!"

As he finished, the waters surged. The same evil forms appeared and spread the thread across the water and it turned into a narrow wooden bridge. He walked over it boldly, free of nervousness, his legs firm and his head clear. He waved his whip, but paid no attention to the swishing waters for beneath.

After climbing over two mountains, he found a homestead in a grove of cypresses and pines, from

which a current of fragrant air was wafted. Instead of knocking at the front door, he turned to the back garden as the Immortal had told him. Though many beautiful flowers grew out of the wall, he did not turn his eyes to them. Reaching the proper place, he wielded his whip against the wall and gradually it materialized into a rope-ladder. The younger brother climbed over the wall with the aid of the ladder, which, when he gave it a pull, changed back into the whip.

In the garden, the younger brother found the two peony flowers. One was red, the other green. Both smelled fragrant and looked beautiful. He turned his mirror towards the green flower and, in accordance with the instructions of the Immortal, called: "Green Peony!"

As he looked, the green flower changed into a girl with the same appearance as the girl he had seen in his mirror.

"Green Peony," said the younger brother happily, "I'm here to take you away. Will you go with me?"

The girl let her glance wander over him. She smiled, but immediately became sad and her bright eyes filled with tears as she turned to the red peony beside her. "How can I go with you and leave Red Peony alone here?" she said. "Though I may get out of the hands of the ogress, I won't feel really happy so long as my sister is here!"

At this, tear-like dew-drops appeared on each petal of the big red peony nearby.

The younger brother, too, felt heavy at heart. He thought that this must be his hoped-for sister-in-law. But what could he do without the mirror of his elder brother? While he was worrying, Green Peony said: "Let's go into the room. The ogress is coming back!"

No sooner had they entered the room than the ogress reached the front courtyard. Peeping through the door, the younger brother saw that the ogress was well clad, though her face and hands were covered with long hair. She paused at the courtyard and cursed, pointing to the room.

"Curses on you, Green Peony," she shouted. "Who let you change back into a human being? Why are you hiding a stranger in your room?"

So saying, she kicked the door open and, with a pull at the lap of her gown, created a gust of foul wind. But before the younger brother's mirror, she could not force Green Peony back into a flower, however strong the foul wind might be.

Having failed in her attempt, the ogress immediately changed her tactics. "You're my good child, Green Peony! However, the young man is so handsome that I relent and agree to let you marry him."

The younger brother and Green Peony said nothing. The ogress then added: "You know I have so many horses, cattle, mules and sheep? It is known

to me that somebody will be coming to steal our animals tonight. Let the young man help me in this matter and I'll let you go with him tomorrow." Having said this, the ogress walked off.

"She intends to kill you," said Green Peony. "She has no cattle at all. She'll arrange for a pack of tigers, leopards, wolves and the like to eat you up."

The younger brother comforted Green Peony: "I've this whip," he explained. "No wild animal dare approach me."

Hearing this, Green Peony lost her fears.

The ogress led the younger brother to the mountain wilderness, and then disappeared. Not a single horse or sheep could be seen. Apart from thorny shrubs which were everywhere the place was barren. Darkness fell. Soon tigers, leopards and wolves came. The younger brother found himself surrounded by a horde of wild animals with glaring eyes and fierce faces. But none dared draw near.

Next morning he returned to the garden.

Unsuccessful in her plot, the ogress feigned weeping before the younger brother. "I like Green Peony most," she said. "I'll be worried to death when she leaves me. I can't do without her. Let me go with you."

Green Peony had already sensed the scheme of the ogress — to kill both the younger brother and herself on the way. Clever as was the ogress, Green Peony

was cleverer. She said: "All right. But you're too old to walk so far. Since you can change your size to whatever proportion you like, will you please reduce yourself and get into this small bronze jar so that we can carry you on our backs. It will be comfortable inside; you can sit or sleep without having the tiredness and pain from walking."

Confident of her power and of the success of her scheme, the ogress agreed. She reduced herself to the size of a mouse, and jumped into the jar. Hurriedly Green Peony covered the mouth of the jar with a stopper which she screwed tight.

When the younger brother and Green Peony reached the bank of the River of Ogres, they threw the bottle into the water with the ogress in it. After that, however, Green Peony sat on the bank and burst into tears. "Curses on you, you wicked ogress!" she sobbed. "You did everything to make me and my sister suffer. You changed us into flowers for your enjoyment. Oh, Sister, how can I leave you? I must see you again."

Green Peony wept so sadly that the clouds gave tear-like rain-drops and the pine trees gave dew-drops of the same shape. Worried with the fate of his elder brother, the lover of Green Peony also sobbed.

Of a sudden, the quiet, green waters became bright, the dark clouds dispersed. A halo appeared,

in the middle of which stood the Immortal. He descended to the ground and, pointing to the River of Ogres with his stick, said loudly: "Listen, water spirits! Bring the man ashore who came to seek his dear one last year!"

Instantly, the ogres came to the surface carrying the elder son. Because of the power of his magic mirror, the elder son had not changed a bit in appearance. Aided by the Immortal, he stood up.

"Am I in a dream?" the elder brother asked himself, rubbing his eyes. At the sight of his younger brother, he beamed with happiness and rushed to embrace him.

The Immortal rose to mid-air again and in a second had disappeared.

The three returned to the garden of the ogress. The elder son took out his mirror and turned it towards the red peony, calling: "Red Peony!"

Immediately a girl in red appeared before them. She was the girl the elder son had seen in his mirror. As her lover approached Red Peony greeted him with a smile of happiness.

The dark clouds over the mountains had faded away. The young couples had realized their long-cherished wishes. When they reached home, the mother was more than pleased to accept her beautiful daughters-in-law. From then on, the family lived happily together.

The Red Spring

(A Han Story)

It is a saying that while there is no banquet in the world that does not come to an end, there are husbands and wives whose love keeps on for ever. And in illustration of this you have but to read the following story:

At one time in a certain village, never mind exactly where, there was a young man named Shih Tun who was a most able and hard-working fellow. In the spring he married a girl, Jade Flower, as pretty as you could imagine, and an excellent housewife. The young couple loved each other dearly.

But goodness, it seems, does not always win its reward. Shih Tun had a stepmother who was a cruel and unfeeling woman. She would always find fault

with the food, no matter how much care Jade Flower had put into preparing it. She would scold Jade Flower, saying the rice was either too hot, or too cold, or served too late. No matter how much work Jade Flower did, and no matter how carefully she waited on her, she would always scold at her, or beat her. Whenever this happened, Shih Tun would feel as much pain as if she had actually scolded or beaten him. But he was helpless, for in those days, it was an accepted custom for a mother-in-law to beat her daughter-in-law. The son could not interfere.

Jade Flower was getting thinner every day, and her face lost the freshness it once had.

One day when Shih Tun entered the house, he saw Jade Flower sitting on the edge of the bed with tear-drops trickling down her cheeks. Shih Tun heaved a sigh.

"Shih Tun!" Jade Flower said, gazing at him. "I have suffered more than enough. I can bear the cruelty and misery no longer; the only thing is I can't bear leaving you alone!"

Shih Tun felt a great pain in his heart. "Jade Flower!" he said, after thinking a while, "you will come to a tragic end if you remain with this stepmother of mine. Let us run away this evening to some other place."

Jade Flower brightened at the suggestion. After midnight, they led two thin horses from the stable,

opened the back gate silently, and galloped off towards the north-west.

There is a common saying: "A swift horse is faster than a meteor." The two horses, though thin, could run very fast. They passed through they didn't know how many villages. Actually, they didn't know where they were, nor did they care. Shih Tun said: "Horses, don't run on the broad road; follow the narrow, mountain path."

It seemed the horses understood him, for they turned on to a steep slope and their hooves beat loudly on the rocky track.

As day dawned they came to an uninhabited mountain. It was spring. The grass was green and the flowers were in bloom. Cranes glided in the sky and birds sang and chirped in the branches.

Jade Flower sighed. "Even the birds have a nest," she said, "but where shall our home be?"

Shih Tun smiled. "We can pass the night in a cave or in the shelter of trees."

Jade Flower said: "I want nothing else in my life if I can be with you for ever." She no longer felt sad.

They crossed a fog-shrouded gully and a high cliff and came to a dew-soaked mountain peak.

Early next day they continued their journey. As the sun rose they came to a hollow. The horses halted. They were surprised to see a fair-sized spring,

the water of which looked as red as a petal of the cherry-apple flower, with a sheen as bright as the moon in an azure sky. Even the wild flowers and grass around it sparkled as with a red light.

Jade Flower caught a strange, fragrant smell. Whether it came from the red spring or from the flowers, she did not know. "We are tired," she told Shih Tun, "and the horses too. Let us have a rest."

Shih Tun agreeing, they jumped down from the horses which began to munch the red grass beside the spring. When Shih Tun and Jade Flower came near the spring, they found the red water crystal clear. Jade Flower felt thirsty. Dipping her cupped hands into the spring, she drank a mouthful of the red water. It was sweeter than honey. As the cool liquid went down her throat, she felt a great warmth spread over her body. When she stood erect, Shih Tun saw that she looked more fresh than the peach blossom. They heard the horses neigh. Looking around, they were amazed to find that the horses had changed—their coats were glossy, their bodies round and fat. Not knowing the reason for the extraordinary change, they were at once astonished and afraid. Hastily mounting, they rode out of the hollow and galloped on their way.

The horses now became swifter of feet, galloping over the rugged mountain path as if it was a smooth, broad road, and jumping over gullies dozens of feet

wide. They raced on thus for days and nights. They could not reckon the distance they had covered. At last, when they looked back, the big mountain, blue and misty, was fading into the horizon.

In the evening of that day, Shih Tun and Jade Flower came to a hamlet. At the head of it stood three cottages, within which lamps were burning. Dismounting from their horses, they knocked at the first door. It was opened by an old woman who surveyed them briefly and said: "You don't seem to be local people. What do you mean by knocking at my door?"

"Old lady," Jade Flower hurried to explain, "we come from far away. Now that it's dark, we have little chance of finding a lodging house. Please, can you let us pass the night here."

The old lady was delighted. "Certainly!" she said. "I'm living alone. If you don't mind, I'll sleep in the east room and you two in the west."

They were very happy that the old lady had accepted their request, and followed her into the cottage. The old lady cooked rice and made soup for them.

She was an alert and kind-hearted woman, and Shih Tun and Jade Flower soon looked upon her as their dear mother. They told her everything—how they had run away from home, what experiences they had had during the trip, and the story of the red

spring. Before she had heard the story of the red spring through, the old mother was in tears.

"Children," she said sadly, her tears still flowing, "I fear you two will not be together long."

Completely bewildered, they were about to ask her to explain when she went on: "The red spring you saw, children, leads from a red mountain. On top of this mountain is a large maple tree from whose roots oozes juice which becomes the water in the red spring. Every year when the maple leaves redden, the maple tree changes into a red-faced devil, with a pair of fire-stars for eyes which can see through a thousand rock walls and ten big mountains. This red devil goes to the top of the red mountain and sees the girls who have drunk the red spring water. He then picks out the best-looking one among them, snatches her away and makes her his wife. Later, when the snow falls, not only the red-faced devil, but the wife, too, are transformed into maple trees." She turned to Jade Flower, "Child, I am afraid you cannot escape him." So saying, her tears ran again.

Jade Flower was alarmed, worried and afraid. But seeing that the old mother was so sad for their sake, she soothed her, saying: "Dear mother, the red-faced devil won't carry me away."

"Dear mother," Shih Tun also said, "no matter how terrible the devil is, he won't part us."

The old mother wiped her eyes. "You are good children," she said. "I have been alone since my husband died. Now you two live here, and we will be one family."

Then Shih Tun and Jade Flower lived with the old mother, who now no longer needed to worry about the sewing of clothes or the harvesting of crops on the field. Shih Tun never allowed her to get tired and Jade Flower prepared the most delicious dishes for her.

Time flies. The wheat was cut. The millet and grapes ripened, and the maple leaves turned red. The old mother was nervous and could not sleep or eat. Every day she calculated with her fingers, hoping that autumn would soon pass. She hoped that the cycle of day and night would roll on faster.

The days in autumn are short. One evening, when the moon had just taken up the duty of the sun, Shih Tun returned from the field, and Jade Flower from the threshing ground. After cutting the grass, they took it to feed the horses. The old mother had cooked the meal and was passing the courtyard when a large red maple leaf came fluttering down from the sky. It began to whirl in the courtyard, until a whirlwind developed, in the centre of which stood a red-faced devil, with red hair, red beard, red eyes, and in a red robe with long sleeves. It jerked its sleeves, and the

maple leaf immediately transformed itself into a decorated bridal sedan-chair.

The old mother uttered a cry and fell on the ground. Hearing her, Shih Tun and Jade Flower, who were feeding the horses in the stable, rushed out.

When the red-faced devil saw Jade Flower, it chuckled, and with a flick of its long sleeves, Jade Flower was whisked into the sedan-chair. Another flick and the sedan-chair, wheeling in circles, rose into the sky. In a twinkling everything was gone, sedan-chair and all. From afar came the voice of the devil: "She drank my red spring water; she's mine."

The old mother began to cry. Shih Tun was greatly distressed; but he did not cry. Helping the old lady to her feet, he said: "Mother! I must go and get her back at all cost."

The old mother stopped crying and said agitatedly: "Child! you must not go. The red-faced devil has carried away nobody knows how many girls, yet no one is ever known to have been retrieved. If you go, you would die to no purpose."

Shih Tun made no reply. Guiding the old mother into the house, he said: "Mother! Do not worry. I'll go at once to find her."

Seeing that he could not be persuaded to stay, the old mother said: "Child, you can't go empty-handed. Here, take this dagger with you."

Taking the dagger, Shih Tun mounted one of the horses and dashed towards the big mountain.

Being impatient, he thought the horse was going too slow, so he said: "Horse, jump over this hollow." In a flash the horse leaped over the hollow. Then he said: "Horse, get up to the ridge." And the horse bounded up to the ridge.

When morning came, Shih Tun found himself on a big mountain. It was big and with many trees and hollows. He searched but could not find the red spring. Tears rolled down his face.

Shih Tun stared at the mountain, wishing it could tell him where the red-faced devil had taken Jade Flower. Climbing to the peak, he looked sadly towards the horizon, thinking of what he would do, if at that very moment, he espied the red-faced devil and Jade Flower.

Brushing away his tears, he said to the horse: "Horse! I must find Jade Flower even if I have to run over all the mountains in the world. Now go to the highest mountain in the far distance."

The horse sped along, jumping across gullies, dashing up slopes and sliding down thousand-foot precipices. No matter how dangerous the going, Shih Tun never reined in. Mountain after mountain, and always yet another mountain, still he could not reach the highest.

It was in a tremendous cave, half way up the highest mountain that the red-faced devil had hidden Jade Flower. The cave was handsomely decorated, with scrolls of landscape paintings hanging on the wall. The bed was spread with silk coverlet and quilts. The red-faced devil metamorphosed himself into a handsome scholar and, smiling, said to Jade Flower: "Since you have drunk my red spring water you shall become my wife. Forget your husband. He shall never come here even if he had three heads and six arms."

Jade Flower trembled with anger when she heard the devil's voice. Sitting in the cave, she could not hear the soughing of the wind or the chirping of birds, but she was conscious that Shih Tun was searching for her in the big mountain. She knew that he was shedding tears for her. Raising her head she said: "I've drunk your red spring water, but I shall never become your wife!"

The red-faced devil grinned and said: "I see, you still expect to see him. I'm not boasting, but if your husband can come to my red mountain, I'll let him take you back." And he cackled maliciously. But when he looked out, he was shocked to see through gullies and hills Shih Tun speeding towards the mountain on horseback. Quickly he changed back into his true form.

Quickly unbuckling a speckled belt from his body, the red-faced devil flicked it in the air. It changed into a tiger which leaped out of the cave.

Shih Tun had jumped over five more mountains and was proceeding at a thunderous pace when suddenly a pair of red lamps loomed up in front of him. They proved to be the eyes of a tiger, which stood, mouth open, directly in his path. The horse could not check its onward rush. Shih Tun rode headlong into the huge gaping mouth. He seemed to tumble into cauldron of boiling water. Bearing the pain with clenched teeth, he slit the tiger's belly with the dagger, and with a hiss he and the horse fell out on to the ground. Looking around he could see no tiger, only a speckled belt lying on the path.

After crossing two more mountains, Shih Tun was within view of his goal.

The red-faced devil, thinking that Shih Tun by this time was no more, was boasting to Jade Flower. But Jade Flower only wept, giving no heed to him.

The devil was in the act of seizing her when suddenly he stopped in wonderment. Through a break in the hills he could see Shih Tun. Quickly taking down a scroll of landscape painting from the wall, he flicked his sleeve and a steep and slippery mountain drifted out of the cave.

After scaling another hill, Shih Tun encountered a bare, steep mountain. The horse made a dash up

but slipped back. Dismounting, Shih Tun started to climb. With great effort he got half way up, but he slid back. His face was cut by the stones and his body was bruised and sore. But he did not flinch. Getting to his feet, he made another attempt and yet another. He was soaked through with perspiration which dripped from his clothes. It ran into his eyes. Wiping the sweat from his face, again he dashed at the steep, slippery mountain, but it had disappeared. Instead, he found himself standing in a hollow. By his side was a pine tree on which hung a piece of a scroll with a mountain drawn on it. The paper had been damped by his perspiration.

Remounting his horse, Shih Tun continued to advance until he found himself finally in front of the highest mountain. It was all red. It must be the red mountain, he thought. With a movement of the reins, the horse proceeded upwards.

In the cave, the red-faced devil flapped his sleeve at Jade Flower who was transfixed. He flicked his sleeve at a pair of pillow-cases, which changed into the likeness of Jade Flower, mute and motionless. Then, with a flash, he disappeared.

Half way up the mountain, Shih Tun looked around and found even the stones and maple leaves were red. Then he found the cave, the entrance of which was decorated with multi-colour gems. Shih Tun halted his horse. "Maybe this is the residence

of the red-faced devil," he murmured. Dismounting, he pushed open the stone door and walked in. He stopped dead, stupefied. There stood three Jade Flowers, with the same slender eyebrows and big eyes, all looking at him, mute and immovable. Worried and grief-stricken, Shih Tun heaved a deep sigh! "Jade Flower," he said, "it is with great difficulty that I have found you. Why don't you say a word to me and come to me?"

Jade Flower heard distinctly every word he said. How she longed to tell him all she had experienced; but her tongue was as if it were stone. How she longed to walk towards him, but her legs would not move. It is said that the most bitter thing in the world is to part from one's beloved, but that was nothing compared with the grief she now suffered. Tears streamed down her face.

The difficulty was solved. Only the real Jade Flower would weep for her lover. Picking up Jade Flower, from whose eyes tears were still flowing, he backed out of the cave. The body of Jade Flower was as hard and heavy as rock. Riding was impossible. Without putting down Jade Flower, Shih Tun said to the horse: "Horse, you know the road, let us get back."

Carrying Jade Flower, Shih Tun trudged over rubble, weed, and shrubs. He would rather suffer a hundred wounds than let her be scratched by a twig.

With Jade Flower in his arms, he entered a maple grove. His legs were sore and his arms were numb, but he would not put her down.

Jade Flower's tears had run dry. "Shih Tun," she said in her mind, "put me down. The journey is long. You'll never reach home carrying me."

Jade Flower was grievously distressed because she was unable to let him know what was in her mind. Fearing that Jade Flower might have doubts, Shih Tun said to her: "Even if you were really changed into stone, I would not leave you."

Shih Tun continued on his way with the fossilized Jade Flower in his arms. Suddenly maple leaves fluttered down in front of him. In a flash the red-faced devil stood before him. With one arm clasping Jade Flower and the other hand gripping the dagger, Shih Tun was about to make for the devil when the latter raised a restraining hand. "Young man," he said, "my heart was harder than flint. I have never been moved and I have never admitted defeat. But today I admit I am beaten. I shall never again have the heart to part a wife from her husband."

As he said this, tears dropped down from his face. In the twinkling of an eye, the red-faced devil transformed into a tall maple, on the red leaves of which sparkled silvery dew-drops. As Shih Tun passed under the tree with Jade Flower in his arms, its

branches shook, and the crystal drops fell on Jade Flower. Immediately she regained her power of speech and movement.

The horse carried Shih Tun and Jade Flower over mountains and broad roads and finally back to the home of the old mother. The three of them passed their days happily together.

As for the strange red spring people saw it again in the big mountain and some women drank its tinted water. But, when the maple leaves turned red, the red-faced devil did not appear, and no girl was ever again borne away.

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